

From: Dr. Ayad Allawi [DrAyadAllawi@allawi-for-iraq.com]
Sent: Thursday, December 20, 2007 3:29 PM
Subject: Pentagon Says Services in Iraq Are Stagnant

Pentagon Says Services in Iraq Are Stagnant

The New York Times

December 19, 2007

By MICHAEL R. GORDON

WASHINGTON — Despite a significant reduction in violence in Iraq over the past three months, the Iraqi government has made little headway in improving the delivery of electricity, health care and other essential services, a new Pentagon report said Tuesday.

The report is the latest of the Pentagon's quarterly assessments on progress in Iraq and offers the Bush administration's most comprehensive assessment of security and economic trends there.

As expected, the report chronicled a substantial decline in attacks on Iraqi civilians, Iraqi security forces and American troops — a reduction to numbers not seen since the summer of 2005, according to the Pentagon.

But the assessment also indicated that the Iraqi government has been slow to take advantage of that downturn in violence by taking the political and economic steps to cement the security gains.

The delivery of basic services is one area in which the United States has been urging the Iraq government to make progress. The hope is that improving the distribution of electricity, clean water and medical care would build public support for the government of Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki and ease sectarian tensions.

But the sectarian agenda of the Shiite-dominated Iraq government has been a hindrance, the study said, noting that there have been only "minimal advances in the delivery of essential services to the people of Iraq, mainly due to sectarian bias in targeting and execution of remedial programs."

At the same time, according to the Pentagon, the increase in the price of oil has increased government revenues. The Iraqi economy is projected to grow by 6.3 percent in 2007. And Iraqi authorities have increased their spending on infrastructure, such as the electricity sector.

But although electricity production has increased somewhat, supply still falls well short of demand, the report said. The shortfall in November 2007 was 42 percent of total demand compared with 53 percent in August 2007 and 47 percent in August 2006.

The United States has built 85 of 142 planned health care centers, many of which have been turned over to the Ministry of Health, which has been dominated in recent years by followers of Moktada al-Sadr, the anti-American Shiite cleric. The report noted, however, that some of the medical centers have not been opened "due to a shortage of trained medical staff" and a "sectarian agenda" within the Health Ministry that has led to the discrimination against Sunni areas.

Sectarian politics has hampered progress in other areas, as well. The American military has recruited about 69,000 mostly Sunni volunteers to help secure Iraq. The United States would like the Iraqi government to institutionalize the arrangement by hiring many of the volunteers as policemen or soldiers. But the Pentagon

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report said that such efforts are “moving slowly” because of “fears by the Maliki government that those forces may return to violence or form new militias.”

While political gains have been tenuous there has been much progress in lowering the level of violence, the report indicated. The number of attacks per week using bombs, mines, mortars, antiaircraft weapons and small arms was fewer than 600 during November 2007. When President Bush began to send additional reinforcements to Iraq in February, the weekly figure was about 1,400.

The number of civilian deaths declined to about 600 in November from more than 2,500 in January, according to American and Iraqi government data cited in the report.

The number of roadside bomb attacks, which are generally aimed at American and Iraqi forces, dropped drastically. There has also been a significant decline in car bomb attacks, which are often directed at civilians, since the start of the year. However, the number of suicide attacks involving car bombs and individuals wearing vests filled with explosives was up slightly from October to November.

More than 3,600 members of Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia were killed or captured from February 2007 until mid-November, the report said, including 54 emirs or senior leaders. The military pressure on the homegrown Sunni Arab extremist group, which American intelligence agencies have concluded is foreign-led, has driven many of the insurgents north, according to the Pentagon.

Regarding Iran, the report said that there has been “no identified decrease in Iranian training and funding” of Shiite militias in Iraq, but the Pentagon study did not specifically say whether Iranian arms shipments have declined. There has been a decrease of attacks involving a particularly lethal type of roadside bomb that American intelligence says is supplied by the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

This article can also be found at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/19/washington/19military.html>

Note: Barbour Griffith & Rogers, LLC has filed registration statements under the Foreign Agents Registration Act with regard to its representation and dissemination of information on behalf of the Iraqi National Accord. Additional information is on file with the Foreign Agents Registration Unit of the Department of Justice in Washington DC.

Dr. Ayad Allawi

From: Dr. Ayad Allawi [DrAyadAllawi@allawi-for-iraq.com]
Sent: Monday, January 28, 2008 4:30 PM
Subject: Iraq's No. 1 problem

Iraq's No. 1 problem

Bush may have to withdraw his support for Nouri Maliki if the prime minister continues to slow progress.

Los Angeles Times

Opinion Editorial

By Bing West and Max Boot

January 28, 2008

BAGHDAD -- Strolling down Airplane Road in the Dora district, it's clear what has happened in Iraq during the last year. A former war zone has become a place where shops and schools are open and housing prices are rising.

The strategy of "surging" 30,000 American soldiers into Iraq and stationing most of them outside of giant U.S. bases has made a crucial difference. Like Gen. Matthew Ridgeway in Korea, Gen. David Petraeus has rescued a failing war effort. He applied the classic counterinsurgency tactic of protecting the population. The people in turn provided information about the terrorists hiding in their midst.

A staggered Al Qaeda is steadily losing one redoubt after another because, in the most important shift in the war, the Sunni people turned against the terrorists and aligned with the American soldiers. Over 80,000 men (mainly Sunnis) have joined neighborhood watch groups that the U.S. calls Concerned Local Citizens. Essential in last year's battles to drive Al Qaeda out of Baghdad, the CLCs also provide Sunnis with a defense against Shiite militias.

Now, victory is within our grasp -- if only the Iraqi government could effectively reach out to Sunnis and Shiites alike who are fed up with violence and sectarian divisions.

Yet the perverse political system stymies such an outcome. In 2004, U.S. and U.N. officials pushed through an electoral process that resulted in votes for parties rather than individual candidates. This left party bosses in Baghdad free to appoint hacks who do not answer to any local constituency and face no penalty for failing to provide essential services. Water, electricity, garbage collection and job creation are in terrible shape, especially in Sunni areas, because the government is run by Shiites.

American battalion commanders have stepped in. Officers trained to attack cities, not run them, have temporarily assumed the duties of city managers, cadging resources and hounding Iraqi officials to disburse hoarded funds.

This situation cannot last indefinitely. American officers cannot take the place of the missing government of Iraq. The CLCs must be incorporated into the police. But the government headed by Nouri Maliki is moving with agonizing slowness, running the risk that civil war may be reignited.

The danger grows because the five surge brigades -- fully one-quarter of American combat power -- are scheduled to return home by August. Coincidentally, thousands of former insurgents will be released from American-run prisons. In Baghdad alone, more than 30 detainees a day are expected to return at a time when there are substantially fewer American soldiers on the streets.

Meanwhile, American and Iraqi units still have to drive Al Qaeda from Mosul and the desert close to the border with Syria, which remains a sanctuary for extremists. Iran also continues to train and fund Shiite extremist gangs. So Petraeus has his hands full. His task will become more difficult if shortsighted officials in Washington push for even more troop reductions later this year.

However, it is the government's ineffectiveness, not the insurgency, that is Iraq's biggest problem. Maliki has antagonized the Kurds, Sunnis and most of the Shiite parties. In no small part, his conduct stems from a perception that President Bush's support is assured. Bush goes out of his way to support the embattled prime minister, whether in news conferences or in their regular video teleconferences.

Believing that the White House cannot effectively pressure him without undermining domestic support for its Iraq policy, Maliki has slighted governance while consolidating sectarian control via a vulpine clique. In a flight from reality, his aides balked over sending a letter to the U.N. requesting that coalition forces remain in Iraq, even though Maliki wouldn't last a day without coalition support.

There are good reasons for the administration to be reluctant to ditch the prime minister when no consensus candidate has emerged to replace him. If the opposition toppled the government and it took months to choose a successor (as happened in 2006 when Maliki replaced Ibrahim Jafari), the fragile security conditions might not withstand the paralysis of an already sclerotic government. But Bush should not repeat in Iraq the mistake he has already made in Russia and Pakistan: overly personalizing relations with another country. The U.S. should support democracy in Iraq, not Maliki per se.

A few weeks ago, the Kurds threatened a "no confidence" vote if the prime minister did not share power. Chastened, Maliki seemed to agree. The tests will be whether he permits Sunnis to join the police force in representative numbers, disburses funds to the provinces and permits legislation for provincial elections certain to weaken his authoritarian efforts to control Iraq. If he doesn't come through, the American president may have no choice but to cast his vote -- probably a decisive one -- against the Iraqi prime minister.

Bing West is a correspondent for the Atlantic Monthly and author of "No True Glory: A Frontline Account of the Battle for Fallujah." Max Boot is a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and a contributing editor to Opinion.

This op-ed can also be found at: <http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/opinion/la-oe-boot28jan28,1,4541833.story?ctrack=1&ccset=true>

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Monday, December 03, 2007 2:37 PM
Subject: KRG Minister Falah Mustafa Bakir: KRG supports women's equal participation in all fields

Head of Foreign Relations: KRG supports women's equal participation in all fields

Speech by Minister Falah Mustafa Bakir
Head of Department of Foreign Relations
On behalf of KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani

Gender Rights Workshop, Erbil
2 December 2007

Distinguished guests, good morning,

I am pleased and privileged, on behalf of Nechirvan Barzani Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), to welcome you all to this special workshop on gender rights. I warmly welcome the Global Justice Center and especially the Center's President, Ms Janet Benshoof, and I thank them as the organiser and sponsor, in coordination with Kurdish Women's Rights Watch.

As you are aware, the Prime Minister supports with conviction the improvement of human, and especially women's, rights. He has openly and frequently expressed his position on this subject.

Today is a good opportunity to restate that the KRG strongly believes that the judiciary must play an important role in developing the Kurdistan Region, especially in securing proper status for women in order to enable them to play an outstanding role in our development.

In the last two years, the KRG, under the direct instructions of Prime Minister Barzani, has tried in every possible way to develop every sector of the region, especially socially, economically and culturally. The KRG is experiencing a period of transition. We are taking steps to emerge from an era of oppression and enter an era of freedom and democracy. Now is the right time to carry out social development in a scientific and modern way.

The KRG has made good steps in advancing the economic sector in the region. We were cut off from the outside world in the past. But today foreign investment has proven itself in our region. The private sector has become the dynamo of these efforts to achieve long-term development.

In parallel to this development of the economic sector, we need to secure social development if we want to have active and equal members of the international community. We have to review and reform our old and traditional attitudes and customs.

Regarding about the attitudes of some in our society regarding women.

The Prime Minister has publicly requested that all different segments of society promote and respect women's work and in the entire society.

We expect the community to offer equal opportunities to our women and to be permitted to put their representatives on political parties to secure the representation of females at the highest level. We expect religious leaders to raise awareness and inform the people about the

valuable role that women have in our society.

The KRG calls for equal and full participation of women in all fields of life, especially in the judiciary and law.

The KRG fully supports raising issues which are relevant to the life and rights of women. The Prime Minister has reiterated that we are a democratic society and we have to discuss such issues openly.

He has also emphasised the role of society and the media. They should carry out their responsibilities to inform the authorities of the violations that are committed against women. These issues should no longer remain in the framework of the family.

Today is a good opportunity for the respected judges of the Kurdistan Region, those in the legal profession, and experts in the field of promoting women's rights to participate in this workshop. The KRG supports such efforts to familiarise all concerned with international standards in this regard.

While we discuss certain aspects of this problem it is important that all kinds of abuse of women's rights or any inappropriate treatment are disclosed.

It is the desire and wish of the Prime Minister that women become genuine and equal partners with men in all fields of life. We believe that women have a valuable role to play at home but at the same time they can play their role at work, in politics, journalism, law or any other field.

People will only feel equality and justice when our judicial system and the courts support the rights of all individuals, especially women, legally, equally and professionally on all issues whether inside or outside the family.

Securing the protection of these rights is a historic responsibility for judges and those in the legal profession. You are able to do a great deal to change the attitude of people regarding such questions. You must be the vanguard, and lead by example in your work.

It is very important that women themselves are more involved in legal work. The Prime Minister fully believes that without having women in the judiciary and legal profession, we will not achieve equal justice.

Women in our society have faced many obstacles and problems as a result of the old attitudes and customs, which no longer have a place in today's world of which we are all part.

We in the Kurdistan Region want to be part of a federal, democratic and pluralistic Iraq. This means that democratic and pluralistic rights must be secured for all regardless of religion, ethnicity or gender.

We must all work together to ensure that women are rewarded this freedom to enjoy the rights guaranteed to every individual. We must all work seriously to this end.

The Prime Minister hopes you will carry out your work successfully and benefit from this training course. We hope that this opportunity comes at the right time so that you better understand international law and how to adjust it with local culture in order to protect women's rights.

Once again, on behalf of Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani, I thank you all, especially the organisers of this workshop, for the important role you play in raising the awareness and participation of women in a civilised way in our society. I'd like to give my special thanks to Ms Mahabad Qaradaghi of Kurdish Women's Rights Watch and her colleagues for taking the initiative and building this bridge with Global Justice Center.

We are confident that you will shoulder this responsibility seriously and work so that women will become equal partners in the life of the community in a genuine way.

Finally, I commend you on this workshop and wish you success in your work. Thank you very much.

This speech can also be found at: www.krg.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Wednesday, December 05, 2007 4:39 PM
Subject: KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani opens Erbil Cardiac Centre -- Largest in Iraq

Iraq's largest and best equipped cardiac care hospital opens in Erbil

December 5, 2007

Erbil, Kurdistan Region-Iraq (DFR - KRG.org) – Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani today opened the Erbil Cardiac Centre, the largest and best equipped heart surgery hospital in Iraq.

The Erbil Cardiac Centre is an excellent example of the public-private partnership initiative promoted by the KRG. The centre was built with government funds and will be administered by a private company.

Prime Minister Barzani said, "All of Iraq, not just the Kurdistan Region, should be proud of this project. The people of the Kurdistan Region, and the other parts of Iraq, need no longer travel abroad for heart-disease treatment. From now on, all Iraqi citizens can come to Erbil and benefit from the European-standard service offered here."

In a forward looking statement the Prime Minister said, "This hospital is a symbol of our vision for the future. Today it is the only hospital to be built in a modern way, with the best machines and technology, and more importantly, well trained staff. But we are determined to build more such hospitals all over the Kurdistan Region and Iraq. I am sure that with the sincere effort and hard work of our people we can build a prosperous country."

The Prime Minister added, "Be sure that we can achieve our goals if all of us commit to the constitution, the principles of democracy and federalism."

Speaking of a government's responsibilities, the Prime Minister stated, "We strongly believe that the KRG has many obligations towards its citizens. Amongst the most important of these are the provision of a secure and stable environment, healthcare, education, and policies that match the modern world, reward initiative and encourage the private sector.

Dr. Zryan Yones, the KRG Minister for Health, thanked the Prime Minister for his leadership, vision and support of the project. He said that heart disease was a major problem for people in the Kurdistan Region, that it was especially prevalent in children, and that the centre would play an important role in combating the illness.

The Erbil Cardiac Centre cost 16 million US dollars to build and equip and took just two years to build. It has a staff of 300 medical professionals, and both pediatric and geriatric care units. Emergency Management Centre, led by Dr Ali Sindi, is the private company that will administer the centre

Speech by KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani

Inauguration of Erbil Cardiac Centre
Erbil, December 5, 2007

Dear Audience, Distinguished Guests, Good Morning and welcome to this event. It is my pleasure and privilege to be present here today with you to participate in this important ceremony.

We are proud that with the continued effort and persistence of our loyal people we officially inaugurate the Erbil Cardiac Centre.

Many people have made a great and sincere effort and dedicated a lot of their time and capabilities to make this dream a reality.

Therefore, I would like to extend my special thanks to the Minister of Health for his encouragement and support of this project.

I would also like to thank those honorable doctors and medical professionals who have come from Baghdad to offer their services, experience and knowledge.

This is another example of living together within a federal and democratic Iraq.

The Kurdistan Region, as part of Iraq, welcomes experts and professionals from all over Iraq. In this regard our doors are open.

I highly value those doctors and medical professionals who are working with us so that together we offer a valuable service to all.

I would also like to thank all the capable engineers, technicians and professionals who have done such a good job.

Finally, I would like to thank Dr Ali Sindi, chairman of Emergency Management Center, for his efforts and dedication and for running this important project.

All of Iraq, not just the Kurdistan Region, should be proud of this project. The people of the Kurdistan Region, and the other parts of Iraq, need no longer travel abroad for heart-disease treatment.

From now on, all Iraqi citizens can come to Erbil and benefit from the European standard service offered here.

The Erbil Cardiac Centre is another example of public private partnership. From the start, the KRG has encouraged this sort of venture.

I would like to emphasize that the KRG supports all similar initiatives in every field.

This Centre has been financed by the public sector but will be run by the private sector.

The KRG has tried continuously to create a conducive environment in which the private sector can play a complimentary role in development and rehabilitation.

The KRG has tried to offer the best services to its citizens but with the support and participation of the private sector this effort will be more effective and successful.

We are always ready to support constructive efforts. We are passing through delicate transitional period. We are paying attention to all fields at the same time. But unfortunately, sometimes some misunderstand the policies of the KRG. As if we only focus on one sector.

We are supporting all sectors and fields according to our capability and opportunity. We support developing the agricultural, industrial, and health sectors.

At the same time, we support social aspects of life. We support the Rule of Law, the supremacy of the judicial system and the principles of democracy.

We in the KRG want to build an educated and healthy society, a society that can secure a bright future for coming generations.

We strongly believe that the KRG has many obligations towards its citizens. Amongst the most important of these are the provision of a secure and stable environment, healthcare, education, and policies that match the modern world, reward initiative and encourage the private sector.

Unfortunately, the medical system in Iraq was badly established and we followed the same system. But this project shows how determined we are to develop the medical sector in the Kurdistan Region.

Today it is time to review our medical sector and make necessary changes. By change, I don't only mean the construction of buildings, but also the method of work, the style and quality of service, the underlying mentality, and the quality of management.

Our people deserve better and more services. Our policies should be a reflection of the will and needs of our people.

This centre will be a turning point in offering advanced services at an affordable price. This will also create beneficial competition between this, and other, medical centres.

As a national duty we hope that our physicians will also understand that the ethics of their profession are far more important than financial gains and indifference to the suffering of the people.

Your mission is to offer your services on a humanitarian, not material, basis. You must be responsible and cooperate with us to change the old medical system in the Kurdistan Region and all of Iraq.

Here I would like to assure the people of Kurdistan that we are seriously embarked on changing this old fashioned system so that we can serve our citizens in the best way and with the best services.

So far we have been unsatisfied with the way medical services are presented to our people. The dignity of our patients must be respected and not disregarded.

This hospital has been constructed in a good way and to high standards. The machines and equipment are to good European standards. It also offers pediatric and geriatric services.

It is the biggest hospital for heart surgery in all of Iraq. This is another clear example of the KRG's efforts to improve this sector.

Here, I would like to highlight some other, non health related aspects, of education.

The KRG has initiated a multi-phase program to educate our new generation. We are building new schools and renovating old ones, all according to opportunity and financial ability. We absolutely believe in the fact that our sons and daughters should learn in the best atmosphere and the healthiest environment.

We are also reviewing our educational curriculum in order to import and establish modern styles and techniques of teaching. We have invited foreign experts and we benefit from their experience and the experience of advanced and developed countries.

There is no doubt that this project will have great benefits for our people. It will help to maintain life and improve the health of a great many of our people, and this is important for us. But we will not stop here.

This hospital is a symbol of our vision for the future. Today it is the only hospital to be built in this modern way, with the best machines and technology, and more importantly, a well trained staff.

But we are determined to build more such hospitals all over the Kurdistan Region and Iraq. I am sure that with the sincere effort and hard work of our people we can build a prosperous country.

We in the Kurdistan Region we have started to achieve our dreams and we are ready to help the rest of Iraq secure a better future as well.

It may not be easy to see the immediate fruit of these efforts. But we are sure that these concrete steps will lead to the development of all different sectors of our society.

The people of the Kurdistan Region, our most valuable resource, are aware of the KRG's sincere efforts to guarantee their national rights.

They are aware of our emphasis on national identity, democratic principles, a federal system, and good governance. When we secure all this our people will enter into a happier and more prosperous era.

The KRG has made positive and important steps through its law enforcement authorities and the Rule of Law to enable people to live in a free, safe and secure environment.

This is a great achievement when compared to the challenges we face.

It is clear that we have voluntarily participated in the political process, reconstruction, and the drafting of a civilized constitution.

We have done our best to make the political process a success. We are optimistic about the future because we have experienced a difficult and harsh past.

Be sure that we can achieve our goals if all of us commit to the constitution, the principles of democracy and federalism.

We are determined to present a bright example of good governance to the rest of the country.

Thank you very much for your presence and for your serious work. I commend you on this great achievement. It is your right to feel proud of this project. I wish you success and continued fruitful contribution.

You are all welcome. Thank you very much.

This article and speech can also be found at: www.krg.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Thursday, December 06, 2007 4:26 PM
Subject: Speech by KRG Minister Falah Mustafa Bakir on Kurdistan Region's foreign policy

Kurdistan Region's foreign policy explained

December 6, 2007

Erbil, Kurdistan Region-Iraq (DFR-KRG.org) – Mr Falah Mustafa Bakir, the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) Head of Foreign Relations, today delivered speech at the University of Kurdistan-Hawler giving a comprehensive overview of the Kurdistan Region's foreign policy within the region's historical context.

Minister Bakir emphasised the Kurdistan Region's historical transition from being cast adrift by Saddam Hussein regime to its current role within a federal Iraq. He said, "Today, because we are a constitutional entity, we benefit from a more equal relationship with other countries and international organisations."

Minister Bakir spoke of the crucial role played by the KRG's leadership, especially Prime Minister Barzani. He attributed the Kurdistan Region's success to the leadership's clear vision and dedication.

Explaining that economic ties are a key diplomatic tool, Mr Bakir said, "It is instructive that Turkey did not close its border with the Kurdistan Region during the recent crisis. This was a victory for Prime Minister Barzani's policy of encouraging economic ties with Turkey. We need to deepen our economic relations with Turkey, to act as further buffer against bilateral tension in our relationship in the future."

Highlighting the importance of public diplomacy in expanding and solidifying ties with the international community, the minister said, "We have begun to reach beyond governments and communicate to people and institutions in foreign lands. A shining example is the Washington Post article, written by the Prime Minister last month on the day that the Turkish Prime Minister met President Bush in Washington."

While he called on Baghdad to address suspended issues such as the national oil law, Article 140, and the federal budget, Mr Bakir also said, "Our foreign relations cannot be independent, we must work to harmonise our activities with Baghdad. For us, there is no realistic alternative. We must understand and accept that our best course is to move ahead as part of a federal, democratic and pluralistic Iraq."

Dr Abbas Vali, President of the University of Kurdistan-Hawler, introduced Minister Bakir to the audience of students, professors and the media. The university is a publicly funded, English-language institution serving the Kurdistan Region's most academically gifted students. Today's speech was the first in a planned series of events aimed at further facilitating communication between the government, educational institutions and people of the Kurdistan Region.

Speech by Minister Falah Mustafa Bakir: KRG's Foreign Policy

Head of KRG Department of Foreign Relations
University of Kurdistan – Hawler
Erbil, 6 December 2007

Good Morning ladies and gentlemen, professors and students of Kurdistan University, it is a great pleasure to be with you today.

This educational establishment is a testament to the vision of Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani. The Prime Minister and the entire KRG know that you, the youth of the Kurdistan Region, are our future. This is why the KRG has invested heavily in this university, and the educational system as a whole.

Here, you are studying and specialising in areas that are important to the development of our region. As you learn and mature, I want you to give serious thought to what you can do to help the people of Kurdistan develop and achieve the bright future they deserve.

In 2006, Prime Minister Barzani appointed me as Head of the Department of Foreign Relations. He charged me with creating a government department that would be the focal point of the KRG's interaction with the outside world.

So today, I want to focus on the KRG's foreign policy.

1991: De facto isolation

As you all know, following the uprising of 1991 we in the Kurdistan Region lived through a period of great difficulty.

The international community came to our aid:

In April 1991 the US, UK, France and Turkey spearheaded Operation Provide Comfort; a safe haven was established under UN Resolution 688. In July it launched Operation Northern Watch, based in Injerlick, Turkey, to provide air cover and prevent Saddam from attacking the Kurdistan Region.

This humanitarian mission prevented the deaths of thousands of our people and enabled them to return to their towns and villages. It kept us alive, and we shall forever remember that gesture of human solidarity.

And here I want to emphasise an important point.

The scale of our suffering was such that the international community overturned the long established principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of sovereign states. Previously, this had been the excuse – the international community would not get involved in the private, internal, matters of sovereign states.

But Saddam's withdrawal and neglect of our region was such an unusual occurrence that the international community was forced to abandon this principle and come to our aid.

At this point, our relationship with the outside world and these organisations was not a relationship of equality. They dispensed aid and assistance, and we consumed it.

One reason for this, besides our clear need, was that the Kurdistan Region was a de facto autonomous region; we lacked a commonly understandable definition. The international community did not really know how to treat us, or interact with us.

International politics and relations have been based for a long time on interaction between sovereign states. Foreign countries were unsure of how to classify us – an area of a country that had been rejected by its central government.

We were for many years, and in many ways, set adrift from the normal course of diplomacy, and developed nations always have great difficulty in their relations with non-state actors.

2003: De-Jure integration and equality

But following the liberation of 2003 our situation changed for the better.

What is occurring now in the Kurdistan Region – democracy, freedom of expression, association and religion, economic and social development – is exactly what the international community hoped for in all of Iraq.

In the years that have followed 2003 the Kurdistan Region has flourished in the light of international attention.

That old phrase, the Kurds have no friends but the mountains, is no longer true.

Today, because we are a legitimate entity, we benefit from a more equal relationship with other countries and international organisations.

Our legitimacy stems from our constitutionally mandated position within Iraq. The KRG is a recognised government in Iraq, and Kurdistan is a legally autonomous region.

We have progressed from being a de-facto to a de-jure part of the world.

Now, we have many friends in the international community. There are 11 countries – Austria, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Iran, the Netherlands, the Republic of Korea, Russia, the UK and the US – who maintain diplomatic representation in Erbil. Two of these countries – Russia and Iran – have full consulates.

This is a remarkable achievement for a place that just four years ago did not feature on the international stage at all.

The benefits of integration

Why do we seek this international interaction?

Overall, we want to share our vision with other countries and with the rest of Iraq. We have learned much from our experiences and have much to contribute to the international arena. And in turn, we want benefit from global expertise.

For example, we are developing ties with regions around the world which share a similar status to ours – Quebec in Canada, Scotland in the UK, and Dubai in the United Arab Emirates.

All of these areas have valuable experience to share.

Another reason for this global interaction is to encourage the growth of our economy. Prime Minister Barzani has made a healthy and expanding economy one of his primary goals.

We are moving from a command to a market oriented economy.

The KRG is trying to create an environment that enables individuals to take charge of their own destinies and create their own opportunities rather than relying on the government to provide all things to all people.

This is why the KRG places so much value on the private sector.

The private sector, not the government, must become our primary engine of growth.

We must rely on the private sector to create new jobs, increase the productivity of labor, and to bring new and efficient management to our Region.

While government has an important role, the lesson of two hundred years of modern world history is that the private sector drives economic growth and development.

We believe that the government has primary responsibilities to its people – the provision of security, health care, an education, and a welcoming business environment but we also believe that the private sector can often do a more efficient job.

The DFR plays a key role in attracting foreign business to the region. We do this in three ways.

First, through interaction with foreign diplomats in Erbil the DFR impresses upon them the safety and security of our region and the opportunities open to foreign companies here.

We encourage those countries to bring business delegations to see for themselves the environment we have created.

Second, we maintain an extensive network of foreign representation offices. We have these offices throughout Europe, the US, and the Middle East.

These offices interact with foreign governments and business leaders and facilitate political, economic and cultural interaction between the Kurdistan Region and the outside world.

Third, we arrange and execute the visit of roughly 20 political, business and media delegations to the region every month.

We ensure that these delegations are welcomed to our region and that while here they meet with the relevant government officials and business executives.

In these three ways the DFR is creating strong and enduring links between the KRG and other governments and international businesses.

Finally, we are using new tools – the tools of public diplomacy to extend our influence and message around the world.

In the past, we chose only to communicate directly to governments, but now we have begun to reach beyond governments and communicate to peoples and institutions in foreign lands.

A shining example is the Washington Post article, written by the Prime Minister last month on the day that the Turkish Prime Minister met President Bush in Washington. This article reached a huge audience and we are told, had a measurable impact on discussions that took place in Washington.

Also, Cabinet officers, myself included, are making more public statements and speeches to wider audiences around the world.

And our KRG representation offices are becoming more active and more visible in foreign policy discussions around the world.

In this regard, I would like to raise today an idea that I first raised a few weeks ago to another audience. I believe that it is time to consider the creation, here in Erbil of a regular group of professionals, academics, journalists, students and others who are interested in world affairs.

Such groups are organised around the world, and meet regularly to hear speeches, prepare papers and publicise international issues.

We could undertake a similar effort, perhaps calling ourselves the Erbil World Affairs Council, and use such a group to kindle intellectual and political interest in the foreign relations of the Kurdistan Region.

No return to 1991

But besides the economic benefits of international integration we are determined never to return to the isolated state we found ourselves in 1991.

From 1991 to 2003 we had to make harsh decisions and prioritise: We knew that the Rule of Law was essential and so we provided police forces and security systems; We understood that our youth would be disabled without education, so we made sure our schools remained open even when the teachers were unpaid; We maintained municipal services; We encouraged rural resettlement after Saddam's savage attacks.

We did well and achieved a great deal; the people had confidence in their leadership. But we never again want to be in the position where such hard choices need to be made.

And so we reach out to the international community to ensure that no one will ever be in the position to abuse us or abandon us again.

Let me move on now to focus on some specific areas of foreign policy.

Relations with Turkey

At the moment, Turkey is in the news.

There are tens of thousands of Turkish soldiers on our border and certain elements of the Turkish power elite seem to want to cross that border and invade our country. The stated reason for this is the PKK.

There is no doubt that the PKK is a thorn in Turkey's side. The KRG has publicly condemned the PKK's actions, for which we are in no way responsible. The Prime Minister has called on it to declare an unconditional ceasefire, lay down its weapons and come to the negotiating table.

We disagree with the PKK's tactics and do not believe they will lead to long term stability in Turkey.

But neither do we agree that Turkey's threat of military incursion will solve the problem. Turkey has tried to solve this problem militarily many times before. These attempts have always failed.

The solution lies only in diplomatic negotiations and compromise. Problems of a political nature such as these can never have military solutions.

The KRG has acted to the best of its ability, and in cooperation with our allies, including the United States, to find peaceful, diplomatic and political solutions to alleviate this tension.

We have cordoned off the mountain areas on our border with Turkey to cut PKK supply routes; We have closed the offices of political parties in Erbil and Suleymaniye which we believe operate as PKK fronts; We have monitored our airports to ensure that no PKK personnel enter or leave our region; And we played an instrumental role in the safe return of the eight Turkish soldiers held by the PKK.

And we stand ready, willing and able to do more.

One thing the KRG has pushed for is four-party talks. We have suggested US-Turkey-Iraq-KRG talks to solve this issue. But it is ironic that the one country in the world that chooses to ignore our constitutionally mandated government is also our neighbor. We are disappointed by this attitude and call upon Turkey to move with the times and accept the KRG as a regional partner.

But progress is nonetheless being made.

In conflicts of these kinds, it is important to look at what a country does not do, as well as what it does do. It is instructive that Turkey did not close its border with the Kurdistan Region during the recent crisis.

This was a victory for the Prime Minister's policy of encouraging economic ties with Turkey. Because trade between the Kurdistan Region and Turkey is so mutually beneficial, Turkey kept the border open. And for this reason, we need to deepen our economic relations with Turkey, to act as further buffer against bilateral tension in the relationship in the future.

Relations with Baghdad

On this issue, as with others, we are working closely with the federal government in Baghdad. Both sides realise that cooperation is essential if we are to protect the interests of the Kurdistan Region, and Iraq as a whole.

Our foreign relations cannot be independent – we must work to harmonise our activities with Baghdad while at the same time standing strong for the principles and traditions which guide our society.

We must accept the reality that there is no safe and secure place in today's world for non-states. From the former Soviet Republics, throughout Africa and Asia we have seen time and again that small, weak regions which try to "go it alone" are swallowed up – often violently – by strong neighbors.

For us, there is no realistic alternative. We must understand and accept that our best course is to move ahead as part of a federal, democratic and pluralistic Iraq.

At first, we were disappointed with Baghdad's reaction to the emerging federal system. Old habits die slowly, and there remains in Baghdad a lingering sense of the old ways of doing things.

There continues to be a tendency to regard centralisation as the best arrangement. Time and time again, the KRG reminds its colleagues that this is not the case.

We have made significant sacrifices to remain part of Iraq – some of the rights and freedoms we pursued before 2003 have had to be set aside in favor of a federal relationship with the rest of Iraq.

But our leadership is remarkably united on the “red line” issues that are essential to us, and while we are happy to give and take on day to day activities, we will never compromise on our basic rights to self-rule, to democracy, and to charting our own course toward economic development.

Iraq has entered a new and federal era and federalism is the only viable solution. We are now a decentralised state. There is absolutely no possibility that we will return to the old way of doing things.

In our own region, and in the entire country, we want to embrace a culture of tolerance. Our diversity must become a source of strength rather than a point of difference.

Another point of contention with Baghdad is the implementation of Article 140.

When we voluntarily rejoined Iraq in 2003 the holding of a census and referendum on the future of Kirkuk and the other disputed areas was a key condition. Of course, this has not happened. The Prime Minister has been very clear regarding his concern at the state of affairs.

Baghdad now knows that we will not continue to play an important and constructive role in the country if we continue to receive nothing in return.

Perhaps the most contentious issue with Baghdad is oil.

You have all read Dr Shahrastani’s comments regarding the oil agreements the KRG has been signing.

To these criticisms we have a simple response: The basis of these agreements is the Kurdistan Region Oil and Gas Law, the basis of this Law is the Draft Natural Resources Law agreed to by all parties in Baghdad at the start of this year.

The KRG did its best to create consensus on this draft law. We are not responsible for the delay of its passage into law. And we will not stand by and neglect our people.

We are using our oil to create wealth for the people of the Kurdistan Region and the whole of Iraq.

Our Oil Law corresponds exactly with the draft national oil law – we will benefit from 17% of our oil revenue and send 83% to Baghdad so the rest of the country will also benefit.

The constitution clearly identifies the rights accorded to the federal government and those accorded to the regions. We have taken note of these rights and will not be at the mercy of Baghdad.

Relations with Iran and the Arab Nations

The KRG's relationship with Iran and Syria is less complicated. For decades Iran has had informal diplomatic ties to the Kurdistan Region and today we are pleased to have an official Iranian consulate in Erbil.

Of course, we have our disagreements. During last Eid Iran shut its border, which resulted in economic losses on both sides. And in September it shelled the border area, endangering our people, villages and livestock.

We condemned both these actions and are confused as to why Iran should carry either of them out.

We desire good neighborly and regional relationships based on mutual benefit, respect and understanding. The KRG maintains a policy of tolerance and non-intervention in the affairs of others. We expect the same from our neighbors.

We welcome our Arab brothers and know that if we work together we will all benefit.

But we remain disappointed that Arab countries seem to be disinterested in our situation. You may have noticed that earlier when I read out the list of countries that maintain diplomatic relations with us, not a single Arab country appeared on that list. This is a shocking state of affairs and one that we desire to rectify. We are actively reaching out to the Arab countries.

Conclusion

In all of its work the KRG draws upon the traditions and history of our peoples.

Of course, we are working hard to reform some of the backward social ideas in our region, but by and large our history and culture is something that we can be proud of.

Our foreign relations flow directly from our culture and values. We are a proud, but tolerant and peaceful people and we seek to extend these values in our international work.

We are a resilient people who have suffered much, and we are proud that we have weathered the storm.

Today, we are emerging from the dark days of dictatorship into the bright light of democracy.

Once the government was divided, today it is united.

Once we could only provide the most basic of services to our people, today we invest in every sector.

Once our independence was unstable and de-facto, today it is well founded and de-jure.

Once we were the recipients of humanitarian aid, today we play a role on the international stage.

Once the mountains were our only friends, today we are visited by men and women of every creed and colour.

Once we were a persecuted minority in Iraq, today we are a key political player, the engine that binds and drives the political process.

Once our natural resources were underutilised and used against us, today we control them and exploit them for the good of all Iraq.

You know as well as I do that we are making progress, and that this is not always easy. We are not always correct in our assumptions and we make mistakes.

You are our future and our hope. I appeal to all of you to think about what you can do for your country. Stand up and act, take the initiative. You are amongst the most intelligent and well educated students in the region. You are in a position of privilege and with privilege comes a duty to those in society less fortunate than yourselves.

Each of you must think of the role you can play to further our cause.

Thank you very much. I wish you all the best as you continue your studies.

This article and speech can also be found at: www.krg.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Monday, December 10, 2007 3:00 PM
Subject: KRG Prime Minister Barzani launches "Bright Future Foundation"

Prime Minister Barzani opens Kurdistan-American microcredit foundation

December 9, 2007

Erbil, Kurdistan Region-Iraq (KRG.org) – Mr Nechirvan Barzani, the Kurdistan Regional Government's Prime Minister, today launched the Bright Future Foundation (BFF), a Kurdistan microcredit nongovernmental organisation that has partnered with US-based CHF International.

BFF, which has been started at the Prime Minister's personal initiative, has partnered with CHF International, a microfinance and microenterprise development organisation with experience in more than 100 countries. The KRG has made a five million US dollar donation to BFF, an independent NGO, to kick-start its work.

Speaking at the launch ceremony at the Erbil Convention Centre, the Prime Minister said, "In line with the KRG's interest in developing the private sector, supporting our society's low income families, and encouraging self-confidence and self-reliance, the KRG has allocated 5 million US dollars as a first step to initiate this activity in the Kurdistan Region."

He added, "The government has promised to reduce unemployment and further develop the private sector. This microcredit system does exactly that. We support these programmes because we want our people to rely on themselves and their own capabilities."

"Our people are not familiar with how to develop business plans, how to give loans, collect debts, or manage their finances," the Prime Minister said. "One of the merits of this program is teaching these skills and establishing a modern banking system in our Region."

Mr Hoger Shali, Chairman of BFF, said, "This Foundation will help vulnerable people in our society to achieve their dreams. We are proud to be partnering with CHF, a well known and reputable organisation in the field of microcredit."

Mr Denis Dragovic, CHF International's Iraq director, said that he was sure this venture would continue the impressive record CHF has in the rest of Iraq, where 99% of its 45,000 loans to 15,000 people have been repaid.

KRG Deputy Prime Minister Omer Fattah and other senior KRG officials attended the opening ceremony.

PM's speech: Microcredit will help small businesses

Erbil, December 9, 2007

Speech by KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani

Dear guests, good morning and welcome to this event.

I am pleased and privileged to be here with you today to announce the opening of the Bright Future Foundation (BFF) for Microcredit in the Kurdistan Region.

With this programme thousands of people in our region will benefit from small loans which will improve their living standard through small business projects.

The concept of microcredit is spreading quickly around the world. It helps to provide short-term loans. This system will help people to develop new business projects or expand already existing businesses.

If we look at the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) programme, we see that the government has promised to reduce unemployment and further develop the private sector. This microcredit system does exactly this.

We support these programmes because we want our people to rely on themselves and their own capabilities. In this way, we show our people that we care about all strata of society.

We want to encourage our people to think of new ways of securing their lives and well-being. It is very important that we all encourage a strong work ethic and collective cooperation. This system also encourages initiative and helps to foster trust amongst the population.

There may be other programmes of this kind in the Kurdistan Region, but the BFF will have a special plan for our region. It will concentrate on fields that have not been the focus of previous work.

Today the system of microcredit has become a global phenomenon. It has helped hundreds of thousands of people all over the world to overcome poverty and establish small, new, productive projects that help guarantee their livelihood.

This idea emerged 30 years ago in Bangladesh. The idea was to make short-term financial assistance available to small business owners. These types of loans helped to alleviate poverty and create many jobs in vulnerable areas. After that, this idea spread to other countries and the Grameen Bank was established. Today, five million people benefit from its loans.

Last year microcredit's creator, the Bangladeshi professor Dr Muhammad Yunus, received the Nobel Peace Prize for his historic effort in creating a system that benefits millions of people on all five continents.

Today, close to one hundred million people benefit from this loan programme.

In line with the KRG's interest in developing the private sector, supporting our society's low-income families, and encouraging self-confidence and self-reliance, the KRG has allocated five million US dollars as a first step to initiate this activity in the Kurdistan Region.

We are pleased today to see the first group of people who are benefiting from these loans.

Let me highlight some important points about the nature of this microcredit programme.

First, BFF for microcredit is a non-governmental, private sector organisation. It works independently and freely without interference from the government or any political party. All of the foundation's decisions are based on sound financial analysis and commercial principles.

Second, BFF gives loans to individuals and small businesses according to the criteria set by its board of directors. These loans are awarded to people and must be repaid over a defined period of time so that the same money can be used to finance loans to others. The money returned from the first loans will be reused for subsequent loans. In this way, every individual participating in this programme will be responsible for the continuation of the programme. Anyone who does not abide by the terms and conditions is violating a legal

contract and harming other people by depriving them of the same opportunity.

Third, we were motivated to start this programme in order to encourage the spirit of creativity and innovation.

Moreover, there is much international financial support to help such programmes.

The general criteria for making loans are:

- Those who have small projects they want to enlarge.
- Those who submit sound and appropriate plans to expand their business.
- Those individuals who have good plans to start new businesses.
- The ability to repay the loan within the allotted time.

Part of this money will be allocated to award loans to rural inhabitants, especially to women, in order that they can rely on themselves to start and manage home-based business.

Within the next few days, more details of this programme will be made available and it will be clear to all how to apply for, and benefit from, small loans.

The project will start in Erbil, the capital, and later offices in Suleimaniah and Dohuk will be opened.

We are confident that if we are successful in this effort we will have more funds available to sustain this project.

When we first had the idea to establish this project we looked for a specialised partner with experience in managing projects such as this. I am glad to announce that the BFF has found a well-known partner in the field of microcredit, US-based CHF.

Apart from teaching us the principles of microcredit, this institution has agreed to make a considerable contribution to this programme. That is why, before activating BFF, we are happy to have gained the support and cooperation of CHF.

This is a good opportunity for us to develop a widespread and beneficial network of contacts at the international level. I would like to thank CHF for its readiness to help this project as a full partner. I appreciate their generosity and financial support.

One of the weak points in our society and economic system is the lack of basic economic skills and knowledge. Many of our people are not aware of the key principles of commercial and banking systems. They are not familiar with how to develop business plans, give loans, collect debts, or manage their finances. Our people have not benefited from banks. So far we have been unable to bring an international bank to help people put their money to productive use.

Therefore, one of the merits of this programme is teaching these skills and establishing a proper banking system in our region.

We in the KRG value this programme as an important step. We hope this programme will develop and grow so that hundreds and thousands of families can benefit from it.

We have chosen the name "Bright Future" for this programme because we are optimistic about our future. We

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believe that this programme will help us achieve our objective.

Again, I would like to thank all the people and groups that have supported us with this initiative, inside and outside the Kurdistan Region.

I thank all the sincere efforts that have led to the success of this project.

I thank the Minister of Finance and Economy for his effort in this regard.

I extend special thanks to Mr Hoger Shali, and all of his colleagues, for their efforts and hard work over the past year. From the first instance we have tasked Mr Shali to supervise and run the foundation. He has formed a capable team to professionally run the foundation. I wish them success.

Again, thank you very much for coming.

This article and speech can also be found at: www.krg.org

Note: Barbour Griffith & Rogers, LLC, has filed registration statements under the Foreign Agents Registration Act with regard to its representation and dissemination of information on behalf of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq. Additional information is on file with the Foreign Agents Registration Unit of the Department of Justice in Washington, DC.

Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Wednesday, January 02, 2008 5:43 PM
Subject: Kurdistan Region's parliament approves Kirkuk referendum delay

Kurdistan's parliament approves Kirkuk referendum delay

KRG Press Release

December 28, 2007

Erbil, Kurdistan - Iraq (KRG.org) – The Kurdistan National Assembly, the Kurdistan Region's parliament, on Wednesday approved the UN's suggestion to delay a referendum on the future of Kirkuk and other towns that were ethnically cleansed by previous Iraqi governments. Of the 111 lawmakers in the Kurdistan National Assembly, 94 voted in favour of postponing the referendum for six months.

Under Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution, the deadline for holding the vote is the end of 2007, but it has been delayed for technical reasons. Mr Nechirvan Barzani, Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), last week also said he favoured a six-month extension of the referendum.

Mr Staffan De Mistura, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Iraq, earlier this month suggested to Kurdish lawmakers that they consider delaying the vote. He said, "An extension is not a postponement, but taking into consideration that the time to carry it out has expired, there is a need to prolong the period stipulated in the article."

The referendum will allow people in Kirkuk for the first time to decide their own fate. Tens of thousands of Kurdish and non-Arab inhabitants of Kirkuk, Sinjar, Khaneqin, and other towns were forcibly expelled by Saddam Hussein's government, and people from Southern Iraq were moved onto their lands. Provincial borders were also gerrymandered as part of Saddam's drive to Arabise parts of Kurdistan.

Under the Iraqi Constitution, a three-stage process should have been completed by the end of 2007: allow forcibly expelled people to return to their land, and offer Iraqis from the South who were settled on their properties compensation to return to their towns; conduct a census to determine voter eligibility; and, finally, hold a referendum for the people of Kirkuk and other towns to decide whether they should be part of or outside the Kurdistan Region.

The High Committee for the Implementation of Article 140, which was set up by the Iraqi federal government to carry out the three stages, has been slow to deal with all the property claims and compensation packages and failed to carry out a census.

The KRG and the Iraqi federal government agreed that the UN could provide technical assistance to the High Committee for the Implementation of Article 140 to help it complete the process.

Many Kurds including lawmakers said they were frustrated by the delay to the referendum that was promised to the people of Kirkuk in the 2005 constitution. However, the KRG decided to accept the delay because it believes in a peaceful and legal solution to the problem and is counting on an end to the stalling of the process.

This press release can also be found at: www.krg.org

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Khrestin, Igor

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Friday, January 04, 2008 5:38 PM
To: Letter From Erbil
Subject: KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani condemns Diyarbakir terrorist attack

Prime Minister Barzani condemns Diyarbakir terrorist attack

January 4, 2008

Statement by Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani
Kurdistan Regional Government

On behalf of the entire Kurdistan Regional Government I want to express my shock and outrage at the brutal terrorist attack which occurred yesterday in Diyarbakir, Turkey.

As I have stated before, these kinds of terrorist acts have no place in a civilised society and must be condemned in the strongest terms by all who stand for freedom and liberty. There is no reason or explanation that can justify this type of terrorism and we join the world in condemning this senseless act of violence. It is our hope that the perpetrators will be brought quickly to justice and held accountable for their crime.

Our sympathy and condolences go out to the families of the victims of this tragedy and we hope and pray that they may find some comfort and peace at this most difficult of times for them.

This statement can also be found at: www.krg.org

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From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Thursday, January 10, 2008 6:14 PM
To: Letter From Erbil
Subject: KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani: KRG to strengthen banking and insurance

PM Barzani: KRG to strengthen banking and insurance

January 10, 2008

Erbil, Kurdistan-Iraq (KRG.org) – Mr Nechirvan Barzani, Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), at a meeting of the Kurdistan Economic Council said that in 2008 the government must focus on developing strong banking and insurance systems.

The Economic Council, which oversees and advises on the Kurdistan Region's economic policies, met on 31 December to discuss new policies to develop banking and insurance. The council decided to set up a special committee, made up of banking experts and officials from relevant ministries, to implement the council's recommendations.

Dr Ezzat Isa, Secretary of the Economic Council, said, "In 2008 we will focus on developing the banking and insurance systems, which will help to increase economic growth. We will facilitate entry into Kurdistan for reputable banks and insurance companies."

He added, "Prime Minister Barzani wants a new special committee to focus on attracting solid foreign banks and insurance companies to Kurdistan's market, which is still relatively undeveloped in these sectors, particularly insurance. The council members agreed that it was vital to increase consumer and business confidence in banking and insurance services, which in turn will stimulate more economic growth."

The Economic Council decided that it will hold a conference in 2008 on establishing an insurance system in the Kurdistan Region. They also studied recommendations made by the KRG Ministry of Trade to strengthen the private sector and promote more foreign direct investment and joint ventures. Several banks already operate in the Kurdistan Region, but the market remains largely untapped on both the commercial and retail sides.

This article can also be found at: www.krg.org

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From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Thursday, January 17, 2008 3:48 PM
To: Letter From Erbil
Subject: US Congress members see first hand Kurdistan's progress

US Congress members see first hand Kurdistan's progress

January 17, 2008

Erbil, Kurdistan-Iraq (KRG.org) – A bipartisan delegation of six members of the US House of Representatives visited the Kurdistan Region in Iraq yesterday for meetings with Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) officials.

The congressmen and women, who visited Erbil to experience the progress being made in Iraq's most stable area, were Mr Lincoln Davis (Democrat, Tennessee), Ms Marsha Blackburn (Republican, Tennessee), Mr Tim Walberg (Republican, Michigan), Mr John Barrow (Democrat, Georgia), Mr Brad Miller (Democrat, North Carolina), and Ms Nikki Tsongas (Democrat, Massachusetts).

Congressman Walberg said on returning to the US, "In Kurdistan, and specifically Erbil, we saw very clearly a strong developing province."

Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani welcomed the delegation's commendation of the progress being made in the Kurdistan Region. He shared their hope that the model of development benefiting the Kurdistan Region will be adopted throughout the country, and their belief that the Region's progress will benefit all Iraqis.

The Congress representatives saw first hand the development of the Kurdistan Region, remarking particularly on the many major construction projects underway in Erbil, the capital city.

The Prime Minister said, "The progress being achieved today in the Kurdistan Region is the fruit of sustained efforts by the KRG since 1991, to ensure lasting security and stability for its people."

Prime Minister Barzani said that the government believes the private sector is the engine of sustainable growth, and outlined efforts to encourage private sector growth and foreign directed investment.

He also addressed the active role the KRG is playing to promote the development of Iraq. He said, "We are working hard to achieve a federal, democratic and pluralistic Iraq. As part of these efforts we continue to be a force for progress concerning the national hydrocarbon and revenue sharing laws. The passage of these laws is imperative for the development of the new Iraq."

Thanking the delegation for the sacrifice made by the US and coalition forces since 2003, Prime Minister Barzani said, "Without your great efforts the Kurdistan Region would not be in the position it enjoys today."

Minister Falah Mustafa Bakir, Head of the KRG's Department of Foreign Relations, said, "Once again it is a pleasure to welcome a US Congressional delegation to Erbil. We are keen for our friends in the US government to visit us and see the progress made possible by the liberation of 2003."

During the meeting with the Prime Minister, the Congressional delegation also met Deputy Prime Minister Omer Fattah, Minister of State for the Interior Karim Sinjari, and Head of the KRG's Department of Foreign

Relations Mr Bakir. The delegation met separately with Dr Ashti Hawarami, Minister for Natural Resources, and Mr Sarkis Aghajan Mamendu, Finance Minister.

This article can also be found at: www.krg.org

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From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Monday, January 28, 2008 1:22 PM
To: Letter From Erbil
Subject: KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani condemns Mosul terrorist attack

Prime Minister Barzani condemns Mosul terrorist attack
January 26, 2008

Statement by KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani

On 23 January, terrorists committed yet another atrocity and an attack on freedom by targeting innocent civilians, among them women and children, in the Zinjille area of Mosul city. The attack also caused massive material damage.

On 24 January, during a visit to assess the damage, Brigadier Salih Mohammad Hassan, Mosul's Chief of Police, was attacked by a suicide bomber and killed together with members of his security detail and civilians.

We strongly condemn these terrorist attacks and reiterate our offer of assistance to the citizens and administration of Mosul, which is outside the Kurdistan Region, to combat the terrorist threat and ensure stability and security.

We offer this in order to eradicate the barbaric terrorist threat to the historic fraternity, tolerance and coexistence of Mosul's different ethnicities and religions – Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen, Chaldeans, Assyrians, Muslims, Christians and Yezidis.

I offer my condolences to the people of Mosul and the families of the victims. Furthermore, I strongly urge all concerned parties to cooperate to expel the terrorists and to prevent the ongoing sabotage against peace in Mosul. The city deserves to be administered by its people in order to guarantee its peace, stability, and prosperity.

This statement can also be found at: www.krg.org

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Khrestin, Igor

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Wednesday, February 06, 2008 1:22 PM
To: Letter From Erbil
Subject: International law expert confirms KRG's authority to manage oil & gas resources

International law expert confirms KRG's authority to manage oil & gas resources

February 5, 2008

**Ministry for Natural Resources
Erbil, Kurdistan Region**

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has received an expert independent legal opinion that confirms the KRG's constitutional authority to manage the Kurdistan Region's oil and gas resources.

The KRG asked for a formal independent legal opinion from Professor James R. Crawford, a professor of international law, through Clifford Chance, a multinational legal firm.

Professor Crawford concluded, "The Kurdistan Region Oil and Gas Law is consistent with the Constitution of Iraq".

He also concluded, "Existing contracts entered into by the KRG for oil and gas exploration and exploitation since 1992 are valid unless they conflict with the Constitution. Pending agreement between the KRG and the federal government on strategic policies, the authority of the KRG to authorise the conclusion and implementation of new contracts is unqualified."

Dr Ashti Hawrami, the Kurdistan Regional Government Minister for Natural Resources, said, "We have never had any doubt about our constitutional right to manage the Kurdistan Region's oil and gas resources, and we are pleased that this independent legal opinion confirms that our actions are in full compliance with Constitution."

Please click on the following links for the full text of Professor James R. Crawford's Legal Opinion.

Legal Opinion (English)

This statement can also be found at: www.krg.org

Note: Barbour Griffith & Rogers, LLC, has filed registration statements under the Foreign Agents Registration Act with regard to its representation and dissemination of information on behalf of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq. Additional information is on file with the Foreign Agents Registration Unit of the Department of Justice in Washington, DC.

Khrestin, Igor

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Monday, February 11, 2008 3:48 PM
To: Letter From Erbil
Subject: Kurds and the New Iraq by KRG Minister Falah Mustafa Bakir

Kurds and the New Iraq

The New York Times

Letter

February 10, 2008

To the Editor:

“Kurds Lose Sway in Iraq as Arabs Resist Demands” (front page, Feb. 1):

The Kurds are not seeking to “seize control of the oil-rich city of Kirkuk.” We have consistently called for implementation of Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution to address the future of Kirkuk and other towns that were ethnically cleansed by Saddam Hussein.

On Dec. 26, 2007, the Kurdistan National Assembly approved the United Nations’ suggestion to extend the time needed for the referendum, which was required to be held by December 2007, for technical reasons. This was a significant concession by the Kurds.

It is true that the Kurds have had “close ties to the Americans” and “have steadfastly backed the government” of Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki. Our contribution to a federal, democratic Iraq is indisputable and by choice. Although so far we have given more than we have gained from the new Iraq, we are not seeking independence, although it would be our right to do so.

Like the United States, the Kurds have been frustrated by Baghdad’s slow progress on many of the political benchmarks, including the federal oil law. But as champions of a free and federal Iraq, the Kurds will continue to press for equitable sharing of revenues and resources and for good governance for all Iraqis.

Falah Mustafa Bakir
Minister, Head of the Department of Foreign Relations
Kurdistan Regional Government
Erbil, Iraq, Feb. 3, 2008

This letter can also be found at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/10/opinion/110kurds.html>

Note: Barbour Griffith & Rogers, LLC, has filed registration statements under the Foreign Agents Registration Act with regard to its representation and dissemination of information on behalf of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq. Additional information is on file with the Foreign Agents Registration Unit of the Department of Justice in Washington, DC.

Khrestin, Igor

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Tuesday, February 12, 2008 6:24 PM
To: Letter From Erbil
Subject: KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani will visit the Republic of Korea

PM's Office: Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani will visit the Republic of Korea
February 11, 2008

Statement from the Office of the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region

The Office of the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region announces that Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani will visit the Republic of Korea.

The visit will advance and strengthen bilateral relations to serve the interests of the Kurdistan Region, Iraq and South Korea.

Since 2004, the Zaytun Division of the Korean Army has been stationed in Erbil, capital of the Kurdistan Region. South Korean forces play an important part in security and development projects throughout the region.

The visit by the Prime Minister is a good opportunity to discuss and establish a long-term and strategic relationship between the Kurdistan Region and South Korea.

Office of the Prime Minister
Kurdistan Regional Government – Iraq

This statement can also be found at: www.krg.org

Note: Barbour Griffith & Rogers, LLC, has filed registration statements under the Foreign Agents Registration Act with regard to its representation and dissemination of information on behalf of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq. Additional information is on file with the Foreign Agents Registration Unit of the Department of Justice in Washington, DC.

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Tuesday, February 19, 2008 4:21 PM
To: Letter From Erbil
Subject: KRG PM Barzani and Qatar's PM Al Thani discuss bilateral ties and economic potential

PM Barzani and Qatar's PM Al Thani discuss bilateral ties and economic potential
February 18, 2008

Doha, Qatar (krg.org) – During a visit to Doha this week, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani and Qatar's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassim Al Thani explored ways to expand bilateral relations between the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and the state of Qatar.

In wide ranging discussions with Mr Al Thani, Mr Barzani outlined the current political and security situation in Iraq and the KRG's proactive role in advancing Iraq's political development. The Prime Minister also discussed ways Qatar could contribute to infrastructure development projects in the region and the possibility of improving educational ties so that students from the Kurdistan Region could benefit from Qatar's Education City.

Mr Barzani said, "My meeting with Prime Minister Al Thani was very productive and it will enhance closer ties between the KRG and Qatar. We are keen to further develop these ties and see many avenues of possible future cooperation."

Prime Minister Al Thani welcomed closer ties with the Kurdistan Region and expressed his support for the KRG's contribution to Iraq's political and economic development.

The two premiers also discussed the other commercial opportunities available to Qatari investors and arranging future trade delegations to both sides. Prime Minister Barzani said that he would welcome Qatari investors and companies for infrastructure development projects in Kurdistan as a first step towards the larger Iraqi market.

This article can also be found at: www.krg.org

Note: Barbour Griffith & Rogers, LLC, has filed registration statements under the Foreign Agents Registration Act with regard to its representation and dissemination of information on behalf of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq. Additional information is on file with the Foreign Agents Registration Unit of the Department of Justice in Washington, DC.

Khrestin, Igor

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Wednesday, February 20, 2008 2:44 PM
To: Letter From Erbil
Subject: Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani Returns to the Kurdistan Region

Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani Returns to the Kurdistan Region
February 20, 2008

Erbil, Kurdistan Region – Iraq (KRG.org) – The Office of the Prime Minister of the KRG announces that after a successful visit to the Republic of Korea and State of Qatar, Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani returned to the Kurdistan Region on the 19th February.

During his visit the Prime Minister had a number of official meetings with President-elect Lee Myung-bak, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, South Korean government officials and agencies, foreign diplomats accredited to Seoul, and private sector companies.

Two Memorandums of Understanding were signed with two large Korean consortiums in the energy and strategic infrastructure sectors. These MOU's will significantly enhance cooperation between Republic of Korea and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

The second stage of the Prime Minister's visit was to Qatar. There, he met Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassim Al Thani. Both premiers discussed a number of important subjects relevant to bilateral relations and cooperation in the field of economics, investment, and education, including higher education.

The Office of the Prime Minister
19 February 2008

This article can also be found at: www.krg.org

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From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Friday, February 22, 2008 5:07 PM
To: Letter From Erbil
Subject: Kurdistan Regional Government calls on Turkey to withdraw troops

Kurdistan Regional Government calls on Turkey to withdraw troops

Statement by the Kurdistan Regional Government
February 22, 2008

Erbil, Kurdistan – Iraq (KRG.org) The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) condemns yesterday's military operations in the Kurdistan Region in Iraq and joins the federal Iraqi government in Baghdad in calling on Turkey to end its violation of Iraqi sovereignty.

It is imperative that Turkey immediately withdraw its military forces from the Kurdistan Region in Iraq.

Turkey has sought a military solution to the problem of the PKK for 24 years. This approach has not worked; the problem can only be solved through dialogue and diplomacy.

The KRG in no way supports the PKK. The KRG has taken significant steps to restrict the PKK's ability to act inside the region. It calls for immediate four-party talks between Washington, Ankara, Baghdad and Erbil to solve this issue.

The United States, the United Nations, the European Union and others with long-standing and vested interests in the political stability of Iraq should join the KRG in pressing for an immediate Turkish withdrawal, together with a commitment by all parties to a comprehensive solution to the problem.

The people of the Kurdistan Region in Iraq must not yet again be made to suffer as a result of what is in reality an internal Turkish political issue.

This statement can also be found at: www.krg.org

Note: Barbour Griffith & Rogers, LLC, has filed registration statements under the Foreign Agents Registration Act with regard to its representation and dissemination of information on behalf of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq. Additional information is on file with the Foreign Agents Registration Unit of the Department of Justice in Washington, DC.

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Monday, February 25, 2008 12:22 PM
To: Letter From Erbil
Subject: KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani calls on Turkey to end military operations

PM Barzani calls on Turkey to end military operations

February 24, 2008

Erbil, Kurdistan – Iraq (KRG.org) – Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani today held a press conference in Erbil, capital of the Kurdistan Region, to discuss the ongoing Turkish military incursion in Iraq and his recent visits to the Republic of Korea and State of Qatar.

The Prime Minister said that he was very concerned by the recent ground incursions by the Turkish military in the Kurdistan Region, and called for an immediate end to armed operations. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) understood that the PKK is a problem for Turkey, condemned the group's violent activities, and had significantly limited the PKK's ability to act inside the region, he added. At the same time, he stressed that only political methods could bring an end to the decades old problem.

Prime Minister Barzani said, "In the 1990s Turkey, at times with our help, tried to solve the problem of the PKK militarily and today they are trying again. But our experience clearly shows that military methods cannot be successful. I am ready to go to Ankara at any point. Four-party talks between Washington, Istanbul, Baghdad, and Erbil will help find a long lasting and peaceful solution to this problem. "

Mr Barzani condemned Turkey's targeting of civilian infrastructure, which is far from the border areas and has no connection with the PKK. He said, "We believe this demonstrates that despite its stated aims, Turkey is targeting the Kurdistan Region itself. I am surprised by Baghdad's weak response to this clear violation of Iraq's sovereignty"

Turning to his recent foreign visits, the Prime Minister said he had visited South Korea to sign two Memoranda of Understanding - the first with a Korean consortium led by the Korean National Oil Company (KNOC) and concerning the oil sector and the second with SOC Consortium, a group of leading Korean construction companies focused on infrastructure programmes in the Kurdistan Region.

He said, "These MOUs, which conform to the Iraqi constitution, ensure that the people of the Kurdistan Region will benefit from enhanced infrastructure services as well as the expertise of Korean companies. In my meetings with president-elect Lee Myung-bak, I expressed our gratitude for the continued support of the Government of South Korea and the special assistance we have received from the Zaytun Division of the Korean Army and the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA)."

The second stage of the Prime Minister's foreign trip was to Qatar, where he met with Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassim Al Thani. Mr Barzani expressed his wish for closer ties between the KRG and Qatar and other Gulf Arab states. At the press conference the Prime Minister said, "There is much scope for cooperation between the Kurdistan Region and Qatar. We are especially interested in strengthening our economic and investment ties and the possibility of establishing scholarships so that students from the Kurdistan Region can benefit from the excellent facilities of Qatar's Education City."

This article can also be found at: www.krg.org

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Khrestin, Igor

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Wednesday, February 27, 2008 10:42 AM
To: Letter From Erbil
Subject: KRG statement: PKK fighters not treated in Kurdistan Region hospitals

KRG statement: PKK fighters not treated in Kurdistan Region hospitals

Statement by the KRG Spokesman
February 26, 2008

A report on the website of the Turkish Joint Chiefs of Staff alleges that wounded PKK fighters have been treated in hospitals inside the Kurdistan Region in Iraq.

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) rejects this allegation, which is unfounded and incorrect. No wounded PKK member has been treated in any Kurdistan Region hospital.

The KRG stands by its past commitments and in no way supports the PKK.

This statement can also be found at: www.krg.org

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From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Thursday, February 28, 2008 1:20 PM
To: Letter From Erbil
Subject: Interview with KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani

PM Barzani: “We will not allow use of our territory to threaten others’ security. Turkey is an important neighbour”

Interview with Asharq Alawsat
February 27, 2008
By Maad Fayad

Nechirvan Barzani, Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), expressed his concern regarding Turkey’s military incursion along the Iraq-Turkey border. He said, “We are concerned about the recent developments on the border. Experience has shown that there is no military solution to this problem.”

The Prime Minister stressed that the military attacks against PKK fighters in villages and bridges in the Kurdistan Region served no purpose: “The KRG supports dialogue.” He repeated the KRG’s belief that four party-talks between Washington, Ankara, Baghdad and Erbil are needed.

Prime Minister Nechirvan Barazani gave his views in an exclusive to Asharq Alawsat by phone from his office in Erbil, capital of the Kurdistan Region.

He explained the PKK problem from the KRG’s perspective. “We want Turkey to understand that we are not a part of this problem. We also suffer from it. Past experience shows all countries, particularly neighbouring countries, that we are a factor for stability in our region, and we have done what we can for the sake of stability,” said the Prime Minister.

He spoke of his respect for the principles of international interaction and good relations with neighbouring states. “We respect the principles of international relations, the principle of non-interference in the affairs of other countries, and national sovereignty.” He stressed that the KRG and the Kurdish people in Iraq are not a threat to others saying, “We have not been, nor will we ever be, a threat to the security of neighbouring countries.”

Mr Barzani made clear his views on solutions to the PKK problem, which threatens the security of both Turkey and Iraq. “We know that this is a problem, but history shows that the military option is not the best way to solve it.”

When asked about the KRG participating in dialogue between Iraq and Turkey to solve the current crisis and the PKK’s presence in Iraqi territory, the Prime Minister said, “We are partners in Iraq and therefore have a responsibility for Iraq’s borders. As partners, we expect to be part of any political equation to find a peaceful solution to this issue. We are serious about working together to overcome this crisis.”

He said the federal government in Baghdad was slow in addressing the issue of the Turkish incursion. “The federal government was slow in addressing this issue and when it did so, its comments were not at the required level,” he said.

Nechirvan Barzani stressed that the KRG’s clear and serious position was this: “We do not allow the use of our territory to launch attacks against any neighbour, particularly Turkey. The KRG has taken the necessary steps to

show our goodwill and determination.”

Barzani said that while he seeks to build good relations with neighbouring countries, this would not be at the expense of the Kurdistan Region’s security and stability. “Security is a shared responsibility that has nothing to do with making political or security concessions, but is rather the joint work of all parties for the sake of security and stability.”

The Prime Minister highlighted the ambitions of his government. “We seek to work with the relevant agencies to find a comprehensive regional mechanism that ensures the stability of the region as a whole. These solutions include political and economic aspects.”

The young Prime Minister expressed his ambitions and aspirations for the region as a whole and projects that are beneficial to the peoples of the region. “Stability is in everyone’s interests. Stability serves the political process, economic development and reconstruction efforts. All these things will help build good relations with Turkey and other countries.”

“We see Turkey as an important partner in the region and Iraq as a whole. We see in the future many opportunities to benefit from dialogue. We have, and will continue to, support investment, trade and strong economic ties which are for the good of all the people.”

Barzani said he was very worried about the impact of a military operation in an area that has achieved stability after years of oppression by former Iraqi regimes. He said, “The military incursion and the escalation of the crisis negatively affect the current situation. Nevertheless, the KRG continues to act as a calming influence. I hope these military operations end as soon as possible because their continuation will only lead to further complications and casualties.”

When asked whether the KRG will allow the Iraqi military to intervene if necessary to defend Iraqi territory, Barzani said, “We hope that things will not reach a point that requires the Iraqi army’s intervention, or for that matter any armed confrontation between us and Turkish forces. I know the Iraqi army will fulfill its role honourably if necessary. It is prepared to defend this part of Iraq despite the fact that the army is really not ready for this kind of confrontation. It is part of the Iraqi army’s sacred duty to defend this part of the country.”

The Prime Minister said, “Our visit to Baghdad is still on the cards, we are partners in Iraq and we must continue with the political process. The aim of our visit is to discuss issues that affect all Iraqis, a mechanism for cooperation between the KRG and the federal government, and other outstanding issues.”

This article can also be found at: www.krg.org

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From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Friday, February 29, 2008 6:24 PM
To: Letter From Erbil
Subject: Canadian Ambassador identifies business opportunities on first visit to Erbil

Canadian Ambassador identifies business opportunities on first visit to Erbil

February 28, 2008

Erbil, Kurdistan - Iraq (KRG.org) – Mrs Margaret Huber, the Canadian Ambassador to Iraq, this week for the first time visited the Kurdistan Region to identify public and private sector opportunities for cooperation.

On her three-day visit, she was accompanied by a delegation of officials from Canada's foreign affairs ministry and from the embassy's international trade and commerce sections. They will write a report on their visit and recommend commercial opportunities here to Canadian businesses.

Ambassador Huber and her delegation were in Erbil for three days to identify public and private sector opportunities for cooperation between the Kurdistan Region and Canada.

At a reception for Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) officials, members of the business and diplomatic communities, UN personnel and NGO representatives, Ambassador Huber said, "I am heartened by the high level of cooperation I've been afforded at all levels of the Kurdistan Regional Government and delighted at the openness to international cooperation that I've experienced in the Kurdistan Region."

The Ambassador added, "All too often foreigners do not have an accurate understanding of what is really happening inside Iraq and the Kurdistan Region. I want to change that."

On the KRG's behalf Mr Falah Mustafa Bakir, Head of the Department of Foreign Relations, thanked Ambassador Huber for her visit. He said, "The clear vision of the Region's leadership embraces expansion and cooperation with the outside world. We are dedicated to building a bright future for our region, and all of Iraq. The KRG is grateful for Ambassador Huber's visit and looks forward to strong relations with Canada."

Minister Bakir continued, "We want the world to know that the Kurdistan Region is stable, peaceful and on the road to prosperity. Because of this, we hope foreign companies will come to the Kurdistan Region and use it as a launching pad from which to expand into the rest of Iraq. As Prime Minister Barzani points out, the Kurdistan Region is open for business and while our natural resources have attracted much attention to date, there are a wide range of investment opportunities in agriculture, industry, tourism, infrastructure, and the financial sectors. I know that with Ambassador Huber's help, Canada and the Kurdistan Region can become greater friends and business partners."

Ambassador Huber met President Masoud Barzani, Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani, other senior KRG officials, and figures from the private and non-governmental sectors. She has served as Canada's ambassador to Iraq and Jordan since July 2007. This is her first visit to the Kurdistan Region.

This article can also be found at: www.krg.org

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From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Monday, March 03, 2008 2:43 PM
To: Letter From Erbil
Subject: KRG welcomes reported withdrawal of Turkish troops

KRG welcomes reported withdrawal of Turkish troops

February 29, 2008

Erbil, Kurdistan Region - Iraq (krg.org) - The Kurdistan Regional Government welcomes the reported withdrawal of Turkish military forces from the territory of the Kurdistan Region.

We support this positive development and hope that it will be the start of a new phase in the region's history.

The KRG reiterates that diplomacy and dialogue are the only way to finding a long term solution to the PKK problem.

The KRG confirms its readiness to strengthen relations with Turkey on the basis of friendship and neighbourly cooperation, for the benefit of the entire region.

This statement can also be found at: www.krg.org

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From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Monday, March 03, 2008 3:26 PM
To: Letter From Erbil
Subject: US Congressmen complete fact-finding visit to the Kurdistan Region

US Congressmen complete fact-finding visit to the Kurdistan Region

March 1, 2008

Erbil, Kurdistan Region - Iraq (KRG.org) - A bipartisan delegation of six US Congressmen has completed a visit to Erbil, capital of the Kurdistan Region, as part of a fact-finding tour of Iraq.

The delegation, led by Representative Jim Costa, Democrat of California, was in the Kurdistan Region to see the progress being made in Iraq's most stable and prosperous region.

Mr Masoud Barzani, the Kurdistan Region's president, briefed the Congressmen on the current political situation in Iraq, the recent history of the Kurdistan Region and its current priorities. He said, "I want to thank the delegation for their visit. It is important for them to understand how grateful the Kurdistan Region is for the US Government's continued assistance and our sincere desire to create a long term and strategic partnership that will benefit the people of the Kurdistan Region and all Iraq."

During their meeting with President Barzani, the Congressmen said they were happy to have seen for themselves the progress being made in the Kurdistan Region and that the achievements of the region should act as a model for the rest of the country.

The delegation also met Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani. Prime Minister Barzani discussed KRG relations with Baghdad, especially the KRG's policy on Article 140 which deals with Kirkuk and other disputed territories, the national hydrocarbons law, and revenue sharing mechanisms.

Regarding Article 140, the Prime Minister said, "This is a question of property rights and righting a historical wrong in a peaceful, democratic and constitutional way. We believe the people of the disputed areas should have the right to determine by whom they are governed."

On the KRG's recent oil contracts, Prime Minister Barzani confirmed that the oil exploration agreements signed by the KRG strictly adhere to the Iraqi constitution.

The Prime Minister commended the delegation's visit. "We want more Congressional delegations to come to the Kurdistan Region," he said. "We are proud of what we have achieved. We want to express our gratitude to the United States for removing the former regime. The Kurdistan Region is now making good progress, we are the gateway to Iraq and an engine of economic growth. It is important that US lawmakers come and see this with their own eyes."

The other members of the delegation were Representatives Mike Pence, Republican of Indiana; Joseph Crowley, Democrat of New York; J. Gresham Barrett, Republican of South Carolina; and Addison Graves "Joe" Wilson, Republican also of South Carolina, Michael Arcuri and their staff.

This article can also be found at: www.krg.org

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From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Monday, March 03, 2008 4:10 PM
To: Letter From Erbil
Subject: KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani commends Turkey's troop withdrawal

Prime Minister Barzani commends Turkey's troop withdrawal

March 1, 2008

Erbil, Kurdistan Region - Iraq (KRG.org) - Mr Nechirvan Barzani, Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), praised Turkey's decision to withdraw its troops from Iraq.

Speaking at a press conference in Erbil, capital of the Region, the Prime Minister said, "We believe this troop withdrawal is a positive development which marks a new phase in the relationship between Turkey and the Kurdistan Region. The termination of military operations paves the way for dialogue and a diplomatic solution to the problem of the PKK."

He continued, "I hope that Turkey will be open to communicating with the Kurdistan Regional Government. Of course, there is the issue of the PKK to discuss, but there are many other more positive issues to explore with our neighbour. Turkey is an important neighbour, we have a lot in common."

Prime Minister Barzani confirmed that KRG measures limiting the operating ability of the PKK would remain in place. He said, "Before the Turkish incursion, the KRG enforced a number of measures to constrain PKK activity. We did so to ensure our territory is not used to launch attacks against our neighbours.

These measures were not triggered by the Turkish incursion and will not be removed because it has ended. The KRG is committed to finding a constructive, peaceful and long-lasting solution to the problem of the PKK, these measures are a testament to that commitment."

The Turkish military's withdrawal from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq marks the end of a nine-day offensive aimed at combating PKK fighters on the border of Turkey and Iraq.

This article can also be found at: www.krg.org

Note: Barbour Griffith & Rogers, LLC, has filed registration statements under the Foreign Agents Registration Act with regard to its representation and dissemination of information on behalf of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq. Additional information is on file with the Foreign Agents Registration Unit of the Department of Justice in Washington, DC.

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Wednesday, March 12, 2008 5:00 PM
To: Letter From Erbil
Subject: KRG statement on incident in Suleimaniah

KRG statement on incident in Suleimaniah

Kurdistan Regional Government
Erbil, Kurdistan Region, Iraq
March 12, 2008

On March 10 at about 6pm in Suleimaniah, a terrorist exploded his car outside Suleimaniah Palace Hotel. A guard at the hotel security gate died from injuries sustained and several people in the street were injured.

Twenty-nine men and women were injured. Most of them have now been discharged, and five are still being treated in hospital. Two of the injured needed surgery.

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) condemns this cowardly attack on innocent people. We express our condolences and sympathy for the victims. We thank our emergency and security services and the people of Suleimaniah for their vigilance and cooperation.

This was an isolated incident in the peaceful Kurdistan Region. But we are never complacent and security remains our highest priority. We are committed to enabling the people of Kurdistan to go about their daily lives in peace and to stay on the path of liberty and democracy.

This statement can also be found at: www.krg.org

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Khrestin, Igor

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Monday, March 17, 2008 3:33 PM
To: Letter From Erbil
Subject: KRG condemns killing of Archbishop of Mosul, Faraj Raho

KRG condemns killing of Archbishop of Mosul, Faraj Raho

March 15, 2008

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) strongly condemns the killing of Archbishop Faraj Raho, the head of the Chaldean Church in Mosul.

On the evening of 29 February 2008, Monsignor Raho and three of his assistants were kidnapped at gunpoint after celebrating mass at Mosul's Church of the Holy Spirit. At that time, the three men accompanying the Archbishop were shot and killed. Yesterday, after a period of two weeks, the body of Monsignor Raho was found.

The KRG strongly condemns this inhumane and cowardly act and reiterates that terrorists cannot impede the peaceful coexistence of different ethnic and religious groups in Iraq. Through their violent acts, the terrorists achieve only shame and condemnation.

The KRG urges the people and administration of Mosul to work together in order to achieve security and stability. It is willing and ready to assist the city administration in defeating the terrorists and restore stability.

The KRG expresses its sincere condolences to the Chaldean community and the family and friends of Archbishop Raho and his three assistants.

This statement can also be found at: www.krg.org

Note: BGR Holding, LLC, has filed registration statements under the Foreign Agents Registration Act with regard to its representation and dissemination of information on behalf of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq. Additional information is on file with the Foreign Agents Registration Unit of the Department of Justice in Washington, DC.

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Wednesday, March 19, 2008 12:53 PM
To: Letter From Erbil
Subject: US Vice President Cheney on first visit to Kurdistan says Region is 'extraordinary example' for rest of Iraq

US Vice President Cheney on first visit to Kurdistan says Region is 'extraordinary example' for rest of Iraq
March 18, 2008

Erbil, Kurdistan - Iraq (KRG.org) - US Vice President Dick Cheney, accompanied by his wife Lynne, became the highest ranking official to visit the Kurdistan Region when he arrived today for meetings with President Masoud Barzani and senior officials in Erbil.

The Vice President said that the Kurdistan Region had achieved “quite remarkable progress in the areas of development and prosperity” and he described the Kurdistan Region as an “extraordinary example” for the rest of Iraq. Mr Cheney at the meeting with President Barzani noted that this was his first visit to the Kurdistan Region, though it is an area he knows well due to his work as Secretary of Defence during the days of Operation Provide Comfort.

President Barzani thanked the Vice President for his historic visit which he said was a symbol of American support for a federal, democratic and pluralistic Iraq and for the progress being made in the Kurdistan Region. “We want to work with the United States to stabilise Iraq. We are part of the solution and we want to be a force for stability in Iraq itself and with all neighbouring countries,” said President Barzani.

Vice President Cheney extended an invitation for President Barzani to visit Washington and meet with President George W. Bush in the near future, which the President accepted.

In his statement President Barzani, thanked President Bush and Vice President Cheney for their support and for the sacrifices which Americans have made in order to secure Kurdistan and Iraq's freedom. President Barzani said Kurdistan Region would remain a loyal and supportive ally of the United States and would assist in every way possible the common goal of a federal, democratic Iraq .

Kurdistan Region Vice President Kosrat Rasul, Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani and Deputy Prime Minister Omar Fatah joined the official meetings. The US side included American Ambassador Ryan Crocker.

During those meetings, the Hydrocarbon Law, the Provincial Powers Legislation, the US-Iraq strategic framework, the Iraqi Constitution, and relations with Turkey were discussed.

Mrs Nabila Barzani, wife of the Prime Minister, hosted a separate meeting with Mrs Cheney, her daughter Ms Liz Cheney and the wife of Ambassador Crocker at which the progress of women's issues and economic development in the Kurdistan Region were discussed.

This article can also be found at: www.krg.org

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From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Thursday, April 03, 2008 7:24 PM
To: Letter From Erbil
Subject: KRG President Masoud Barzani: A bright future in the other Iraq

A bright future in the other Iraq

April 2, 2008

By President Masoud Barzani

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq has made significant progress since the liberation of 2003. Through determination and hard work our Region really has become “the other Iraq.” Our future has not always looked so bright. During the previous regimes our people suffered through attempted genocide. We were militarily attacked, and politically and economically sidelined.

In 1991 our Region achieved a measure of autonomy when we repelled Saddam Hussein’s ground forces, and the international community established the no-fly zone to protect our airspace.

However, it was only in 2003 that our people truly escaped the threat of totalitarianism. The liberation by US and coalition forces was a just and courageous decision. We in the Kurdistan Region are proud to have fought side by side with our allies to achieve this noble goal. The removal of Saddam Hussein was welcomed all over the country, but nowhere more so than in the Kurdistan Region.

In the periods since our liberation we have avoided many of the problems experienced in the rest of the country. Our political parties have formed a government of unity and are focused on cooperation and development; our private sector attracts good foreign direct investment; and our Region is unbloodied by sectarian violence. Above all, our people are tolerant and patient. As past victims of the worst kind of oppression and violence, we understand more than most the dangers of sectarian and ethnic violence and we will not allow their development here.

We are committed to being an active member of a federal, democratic, pluralistic Iraq, but we prize the high degree of autonomy we have achieved.

Our people benefit from a democratically elected parliament and Ministries that oversee every aspect of the Region’s internal activity.

We understand that the private sector is the key to long term growth and development. Our role is to create an environment that will attract investment, and enable it to flourish. In July 2006 the Kurdistan National Assembly passed the Investment Law. This provides significant incentives, tax and otherwise, to foreign businesses working in our Region. In August 2007 the Kurdistan Oil & Gas Law was passed. This will ensure the best international energy companies will invest in our Region and that the shared resources will be used for the benefit of the peoples of the Kurdistan Region, and indeed the rest of Iraq.

We have made good progress, on many fronts and in a short time, but there remains much to do. Peace, freedom, democracy, and prosperity are simple words for concepts which are difficult to achieve. We are undeterred by this difficulty. Past hardship has steeled us to the task ahead. We are moving towards a bright future. We hope you will come and share it.

Read **The Kurdistan Region** section in the November/December 2007 issue of Foreign Affairs magazine.

This article can also be found at: www.krg.org

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From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Monday, April 21, 2008 2:21 PM
To: Letter From Erbil
Subject: KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani's statement on talks with Baghdad

PM Nechirvan Barzani's statement on talks with Baghdad

April 19, 2008

Baghdad, Iraq (KRG.org) – Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)

Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani issued the following statement on his recent meetings with Iraqi federal government officials in Baghdad.

He said, "Our meetings in Baghdad were marked by a positive feeling of cooperation and progress. The overall purpose of this most recent round of bilateral meetings between the KRG and the Federal Government in Baghdad was to discuss the mechanism of relations between our two bodies as partners in the governance of Iraq, the advancement of our political process and other various issues regarding the future of Iraq."

During the meetings a wide range of topics were discussed. Amongst these were:

1. The national hydrocarbon law.
2. The status of the Peshmerga, the constitutionally mandated guard force of the Kurdistan Region.
3. Article 140 of the Constitution, regarding the status of the disputed territories.

Regarding the hydrocarbon (oil and gas) law, both sides agreed on the following principles: all ongoing negotiations will be within the framework of the constitution; the KRG and Baghdad have agreed they will start with the previously negotiated, February 2007 draft hydrocarbon as the basis of the new draft law to be submitted to parliament. Once agreement has been reached, the laws concerning oil and gas, revenue sharing, the Iraqi National Oil Company, and the restructuring of the Oil Ministry will be submitted as one package.

Concerning the Peshmerga, it has been decided that a commission from the Federal Government in Baghdad will visit the Kurdistan Region in the near future to discuss practical steps going forward.

On the issue of Article 140, which concerns the disputed areas in Iraq, work is continuing within the framework established by the United Nations. As a first step towards resolution of this issue, the UN is expected to present its proposal to the relevant authorities in the Federal Government and the KRG in the near future.

The series of talks served to advance cooperation and coordination between the two governing bodies, ensure the success of the federal system in Iraq, and the implementation of constitutional commitments to ensure the country's legal process.

Besides the evident goodwill between both parties, the talks demonstrated good progress towards resolving the issues under discussion. Both sides are clearly committed to the success of the federal system in Iraq. These talks succeeded in furthering the achievement of national reconciliation in Iraq in order to enhance the lives of all Iraqis.

While circumstances in Iraq are such that this process is not a quick one and the issues under discussion are complicated and will take time to solve, the talks made significant progress and underscore the commitment of both the KRG and the Federal Government to finding and implementing long term and mutually agreeable solutions.

The success of these most recent talks strengthens the federal system in Iraq and will ensure a prosperous future for the Kurdistan Region and all Iraq.

This statement can also be found at: www.krg.org

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From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Thursday, April 24, 2008 11:23 AM
To: Letter From Erbil
Subject: KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani reports progress in Baghdad meetings

KRG Prime Minister reports progress in Baghdad meetings

April 22, 2008

Erbil, Kurdistan – Iraq (KRG.org) The Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) Prime Minister, Mr Nechirvan Barzani in Erbil today said that he is very optimistic about his recent discussions with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki on the hydrocarbons law, the Peshmerga forces and Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution.

The Premier was speaking at a press conference in Erbil, the capital of the Kurdistan Region, following ten days of meetings in Baghdad. The press conference coincided with Kurdistan Press Day, and Mr Barzani congratulated the assembled journalists on the 110th anniversary of the first Kurdish news publication.

In Baghdad he had met Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and other senior federal government officials, to discuss KRG-Baghdad relations and other issues of concern to the KRG and Iraq as a whole. These meetings, to discuss complex issues, play an essential part in the creation of a new Iraq.

Mr Barzani said, "I am very optimistic about our discussions with Prime Minister al-Maliki. Such talks are necessary for all of Iraq. The problems we face will take time to solve, they are complex and every solution must consider the interests of all Iraqis."

In reference to the national oil law, the Prime Minister confirmed that talks had resumed and was positive about finding a mutually agreeable result. He said, "All parties agree that the solution lies within a legal and constitutional framework and that we will resume our negotiations where we left off, using the draft hydrocarbon law of February 2007."

He added, "We have also agreed that the national oil law, the revenue sharing law, and the laws concerning the Iraqi National Oil Company and the Oil Ministry in Baghdad will be submitted as one package."

In response to a question, Prime Minister Barzani said, "'The national hydrocarbon law will contain the mechanism for a federal commission of technical experts to confirm contracts using agreed criteria. Since the KRG's contracts have been drafted in a transparent, legal and professional manner and approved on the basis of technical, not political, considerations I do not anticipate any problems."

The Premier announced significant progress on the future and status of the Peshmerga forces, the constitutionally mandated regional guard. Two military divisions of the Iraqi Army will be formed from the Peshmerga and stationed in the Kurdistan Region. The remaining Peshmerga forces, who are regional guards, will be financed in consultation with Prime Minister al-Maliki and others in the Federal government. A commission from the federal Ministry of Defence will travel to the Kurdistan Region to address the issue in the near future.

Mr Barzani affirmed the Peshmerga's important role, "The Peshmerga has a duty to protect the Kurdistan Region, but being a vital part of Iraq we are also determined to support Prime Minister al-Maliki in maintaining law and order all over the country."

The Iraqi and KRG prime ministers also discussed Article 140 of the constitution which concerns the disputed territories in Iraq. Mr Barzani said, “Article 140 is very important to the people of the Kurdistan Region and those of all Iraq. We look forward to seeing the forthcoming United Nations’ proposal and will continue to work with that organisation and Baghdad to find a peaceful and fair solution.”

Previous Iraqi regimes expelled Kurds, Turkmen and Christians from some of the 'disputed' areas such as Kirkuk, and gerry-mandered provincial borders to change their demography. Article 140 sets out a legal and administrative process to remedy this injustice.

This article can also be found at: www.krg.org

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From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Friday, April 25, 2008 1:24 PM
To: Letter From Erbil
Subject: Miliband and Barzani discuss Turkey, Article 140 and political progress in Iraq

Miliband and Barzani discuss Turkey, Article 140 and political progress in Iraq

April 25, 2008

Salahaddin, Kurdistan - Iraq (KRG.org) - President Masoud Barzani yesterday met Mr David Miliband, the British Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, to discuss political progress in Iraq, relations with Turkey and Article 140 of the Constitution.

The Kurdistan Region President welcomed the UK's Foreign Secretary on his second visit in five months. They touched on a wide range of issues in a meeting attended by Vice President Kosrat Rasul, Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani, Deputy Prime Minister Omer Fattah and other officials.

At a press conference following their meeting, Mr Miliband said, "I am here as a friend of Iraqi Kurdistan and as someone who believes that this is as a very important part of Iraq where prospects for stability, security and prosperity are very good. We had very good discussions about the critical role of the Kurdish region economically and socially, and about the Kurdish voice in big decisions in Baghdad. We also had an important discussion about regional issues where the stability and political progress and are very important."

President Barzani said on Article 140, "This is a constitutional commitment, and there is a clear road map on how to solve this major historic problem. Indeed, we are working hard to solve this issue, but this does not mean that it will be forgotten because of delays or the passage of time. The main point for us is to look for the best possible way to solve this issue, as it is clearly stipulated in the Constitution."

Mr Miliband said it was necessary for the Turkish government, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the Federal Government of Iraq to find a lasting settlement to the situation with Turkey. The Turkish military in recent months launched military operations against the PKK on the border with Kurdistan Region in Iraq.

He said, "It is very important to say that there is no solution through violence to the divisions that exist, in the end a political settlement is essential to bridge the divide that exists from close working of north and south of the border", a view shared by President Barzani who said he was ready to do whatever is necessary to help find a political solution.

The meeting with the Foreign Secretary also focused on the situation in Basra and the support given to Prime Minister Maliki by President Barzani and President Jalal Talabani of Iraq. Mr Miliband said that support was important, and that he saw a change in the political dynamics of Iraq which could lead to greater unity and political progress, for example, in passing key legislation such as the hydrocarbons law.

Mr Miliband and the President also discussed Article 140 of the Constitution on the issue of disputed territories such as Kirkuk. Mr Miliband expressed his support for the role of the United Nations in implementing Article 140 and, speaking at a press conference after the meeting, said the delays in implementation so far should not be seen as Kirkuk had been forgotten.

Deputy Prime Minister Fattah gave Mr Miliband an overview of the economic progress in Kurdistan Region. At the press conference with President Barzani, Mr Miliband said, "I think there are big opportunities for British

investment and companies and there is some responsibility on me to make sure that people know the real story of the north of Iraq, and that people know the real peace and prosperity that exists here".

Mr Miliband extended an invitation to President Barzani to visit Great Britain, which the President accepted.

This article can also be found at: www.krg.org

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From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Tuesday, April 29, 2008 2:41 PM
To: Letter From Erbil
Subject: KRG welcomes talks with Turkey

KRG welcomes talks with Turkey

April 28, 2008

Erbil, Kurdistan – Iraq (KRG.org) – The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) welcomed the Turkish Foreign Minister's remarks today that Turkey is ready to hold talks.

Foreign Minister Ali Babaeen made the remarks at a press conference today in Ankara. The KRG, which has called for dialogue for some time, has reacted positively to Turkey's decision. The National Security Council (MKC) has also expressed its willingness recently to have talks with the Kurdistan Region's administration.

Mr Falah Mustafa Bakir, the KRG's Head of Foreign Relations, said, "We are pleased to hear that Turkey wishes for cooperation and dialogue. We have pledged the same in return. What we have in common with Turkey is much greater than our differences. We want to use dialogue to resolve concerns regarding the stability of the border, and we do not believe there is a military solution in the long term to this problem. Such talks in the near future will help to develop relations between the KRG as part of Iraq, and Turkey as an important neighbour. We will do this in the spirit of friendship."

The KRG believes that air strikes on its border with Turkey cannot solve the PKK problem, and has been ready to help find a peaceful solution. Turkey is the Kurdistan Region's biggest economic partner, and the KRG believes that talks will provide an opportunity to discuss many areas of mutual interest that will benefit both sides.

This article can also be found at: www.krg.org

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From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Monday, May 05, 2008 5:38 PM
To: Letter From Erbil
Subject: KRG Prime Minister Barzani receives honorary doctorate for progressive vision

Prime Minister Barzani receives honorary doctorate for progressive vision

May 3, 2008

Erbil, Kurdistan – Iraq (KRG.org) – Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani will receive an honorary Doctor of Public Service degree from Washington & Jefferson College in May 2008.

The university, founded in 1781, is one of America's oldest and most distinguished liberal arts institutions, especially excelling in studies pertaining to law and health. The college is awarding its honorary degree in recognition of the Prime Minister's progressive vision and leadership.

Prime Minister Barzani said, "I am honored by Washington & Jefferson's award and accept it with gratitude on behalf of the people of the Kurdistan Region. Without the close cooperation between the KRG and the people of the region the progress we are making today would be impossible."

Falah Mustafa Bakir, Head of the KRG's Department of Foreign Relations, said, "The Kurdistan Region of Iraq and the United States enjoy a close relationship and so we especially appreciate this award coming from a respected institution of higher education in the United States."

Mr. Bakir also said, "It is gratifying that the international community recognizes in this way the vision and leadership of the Prime Minister, especially his efforts to develop the economy, foster emerging democracy, enhance human rights and the rights of women, and support the Rule of Law."

Washington & Jefferson President Tori Haring-Smith said, "Prime Minister Barzani has been a strong and outspoken ally of the United States throughout his time in public service, and Washington & Jefferson College is taking the initiative to recognize his contributions in the region and his efforts to make a difference through democracy."

"Prime Minister Barzani projects a progressive vision for the Kurdistan Region and the rest of Iraq, with an emphasis on education, the rights of women and minorities, and economic development," said Mr. Jess Baily, the US Department of State's representative in Erbil, capital of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

In 2007, the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, recognized Prime Minister Barzani as one of its Young Global Leaders of the year.

This article can also be found at: www.krg.org

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From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Tuesday, May 20, 2008 12:05 PM
To: Letter From Erbil
Subject: KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani in The Wall Street Journal: We Are Making Progress in Iraq

We Are Making Progress in Iraq

The Wall Street Journal

By NECHIRVAN BARZANI

May 20, 2008; Page A21

While the media offers mostly images of violence, and many Americans have grown weary of the war in Iraq, I bring hopeful news to Washington this week as I meet with the administration and members of Congress.

Since 2003, we have built the Kurdistan Region as a model for democracy and a gateway for development for all of Iraq. We are willing partners in this transition toward an Iraqi government that is representative of all its people. Through our peshmerga forces, we provide some of the most effective units against al Qaeda and other terrorist groups. We Kurds are committed to a federal, democratic Iraq at peace within its borders and with its neighbors.

We are working with Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and the Iraqi leadership in Baghdad on the difficult issues facing our country. Our relationship with Iraq's federal government has never been better. And progress is being made on an oil law, the status of disputed territories, the proper role for Iraq's neighbors to play, and on relations between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and Turkey.

First, the oil law. We will now start negotiations using a draft drawn up in February of 2007. We'll also establish a process to send the national oil law, the revenue sharing law, and the laws concerning the Iraqi National Oil Company and the Oil Ministry in Baghdad to parliament as one package – to be voted up or down.

New oil contracts will be approved based on agreed-upon guidelines. The oil exploration contracts the KRG has already signed won't present a problem, because they were negotiated based on the highest standards of transparency.

There is also progress in settling the status of Kirkuk and other disputed territories. Previous Iraqi regimes expelled Kurds, Turkmen and Christians from Kirkuk, and gerrymandered provincial borders to change its demography. Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution establishes a legal process to remedy this injustice. We are encouraged that the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary General is helping to develop a proposal regarding the implementation of Article 140.

As we resolve internal issues, we also understand the importance of a peaceful relationship with all our neighbors, based on mutual respect and noninterference in internal affairs.

To that end, we will continue reassuring our neighbors that a federal Iraq is not a threat. But we will also continue to encourage our neighbors to do what they can to stop terrorists from infiltrating Iraq.

We think it is imperative that Middle Eastern states send their diplomatic representatives to Iraq, and for these states to proactively prevent terrorists from slipping across their borders. Unprovoked and recurring bombardment of the Kurdistan Region by Turkey and Iran must stop.

There has also been a historic step forward in KRG-Turkish relations. On May 1, I represented my government in the first high-level, official bilateral meeting with Turkey. Held in Baghdad, the meeting was conducted in a cordial atmosphere, and both sides stressed similar views on a wide range of issues. We reiterated to our Turkish colleagues our commitment to good neighborly relations, which is underscored by the growing Turkish investment in the Kurdistan Region. Our talks also focused on the need for practical steps and continued dialogue on all outstanding issues, including the problem of the PKK.

We Kurds understand and share America's frustration with the pace of political progress in Iraq. We are doing all we can to create security, stability and prosperity. While progress has not come fast enough, Iraq remains a worthy cause.

As Americans debate the future of the U.S. role in Iraq, allow me to say that America's mission remains vital to the stability and security of our region. A precipitous withdrawal of U.S. forces could be calamitous. We welcome a U.S. presence in the Kurdistan Region as part of any redeployment of forces.

The Kurdish people of Iraq suffered under Saddam Hussein. And we fought and died alongside Americans to liberate our country. There is no ambiguity about the depth of gratitude that Kurds feel for America's sacrifices in Iraq. Americans who have been killed or wounded in Iraq are heroes to me and to all of Iraq's Kurds. We will never forget what you have done for us.

Mr. Barzani is prime minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq.

This op-ed can also be found at: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB121124572497705757.html>

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From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Friday, May 30, 2008 4:40 PM
To: Letter From Erbil
Subject: KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani calls for individual responsibility at engineers conference

Prime Minister calls for individual responsibility at engineers conference

May 28, 2008

Erbil, Kurdistan – Iraq (KRG.org) – Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani today in Erbil called for engineers to harness the latest technology and for the private sector to play an even greater role in the Kurdistan Region's progress.

The Prime Minister made the remarks in a speech on the first day of a contracting, design and engineering conference. The aim of the conference is for engineers to explore how they can establish innovative private engineering firms that can better participate in the Kurdistan Region's reconstruction and serve both foreign and local investors.

Prime Minister Barzani said, "Each one of us, based on our own duties, is responsible for the advancement of our society, and all must play a role in the process of change. Progress can not take root when everyone waits for the government to act and no individual initiative is taken. In order to progress, we must all work together." He added that responsibility and pride in one's work are the key to clamping down on negligence, laziness and corruption.

The Prime Minister said that the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) would play its part by providing and facilitating the right education. He said, "First we must develop our education system, particularly in the areas of higher education, engineering and sciences. Second, we need to establish national scientific centres and institutions for research and analysis in the fields of industry, agriculture, construction and information technology so that they act as the catalyst for our progress in the Kurdistan Region. And third we must benefit from the opportunities of transferable technologies at an international level. We need to achieve the ability to connect to that network."

Mr Dilshad Jaff, a member of the conference's preparatory committee, also addressed the delegates. He said, "This conference symbolises the change that has taken root within our Region. We are experiencing rapid growth in our private sector, and all sectors are beginning to understand the importance of cooperation and individual responsibility. While we have challenges to overcome, we are seeing that the people of the Kurdistan Region are fully capable of working towards a bright and economically flourishing future for all."

The three-day conference organised by the KRG has attracted more than 350 engineers from all three governorates of Suleimaniah, Dohuk and Erbil. The theme of the conference is "The best use of our engineering capacity for the development process in the Kurdistan Region".

This article can also be found at: www.krg.org

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Khrestin, Igor

From: Letter From Erbil [LetterFromErbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Friday, May 30, 2008 4:05 PM
To: Letter From Erbil
Subject: KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani's Speech at KCEDO Engineers Conference

2008 JUN 25 AM 11:28
CPE/ISS/REGISTRATION UNIT

Prime Minister's speech at engineers conference

Erbil, May 28, 2008

Speech by KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani

Engineers Conference: Kurdistan Contracting Engineering and Design Organisations (KCEDO)

Distinguished guests and attendees,

Good morning and welcome to this important conference. I am very pleased to be here and to have the opportunity to participate in discussions on this crucial subject: The development of human resources and the economy of the Kurdistan Region.

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) places social development and strengthening of the economy on the top of its priority list. We give special attention to the advancement of human and technical capabilities on the one hand, and the development of our natural resources on the other.

Our vision to build a progressive, prosperous and stable society in the Kurdistan Region starts with the development of our capabilities. We in the KRG have allocated considerable financial resources to this, but we need increased efforts in the private sector, in the form of local and international investors, to secure the success of our efforts.

By observing the experiences of successful nations in the world, we know that we must implement fundamental changes. These changes will allow us to transform from a model of under-development, to one where we can encourage the growth of our indigenous human resources to change to a model based on participation.

Each nation may choose its own methods and path to make these changes. We see three aspects within the Kurdistan Region that need specific focus.

First, we must, generally speaking and at all stages, develop our education system in the Region in order to have a strong system particularly in the areas of higher education, engineering and sciences.

Second, we need to establish national scientific centres and institutions for research and analysis in the fields of industry, agriculture, construction and information technology so that they act as the catalyst for our progress in the Kurdistan Region

Third, we must benefit from the opportunities of transferable technologies at the international level. We need to achieve the ability to connect ourselves to that network.

Ladies and Gentleman,

We are now part of the global economy that is shaped by WTO rules, competition laws, private property protection laws, and standard and quality control rules. World trade is now dominated by manufacturing and

products with high science and technology inputs. Our ability to interact productively with this world depends to a great extent on our ability to achieve progress in the field of learning and in mastering technologies.

In order to be part of that world of production, we need to succeed in the area of training, self-learning and other paths to acquiring technological expertise.

We all must work hard to acquire and use this technology so that it becomes a part of our basic policy and the cornerstone of all programmes.

This is the main theme of this gathering because it is the construction industry, contracting companies, engineering and design companies that can acquire and have much to gain from new technologies.

As you have learned from your experiences, acquiring technology and interacting with it cannot be successful on an individual basis or with a single company. It needs the right environment, existing institutions and infrastructures, enabling systems and the right policies to support and develop such capabilities.

The three sectors of engineering, construction and design are key elements in developing our service infrastructure, and therefore the development of our capabilities in these three areas are the main areas of attention for the KRG.

In addition to this effort many others have been started:

- Industry - in the preparatory stages
- Review and reform of the education system
- Establishing a technical industry within our colleges and universities
- Establishing a strong exchange programmes with international education institutions

Our region and our people have a rich culture and much knowledge in the construction field, with expert masons and capable and experienced engineers. A considerable number of competent and skilled people have chosen the engineering profession, and we in the KRG now rely on them to help rebuild infrastructure that will in turn contribute to developing other sectors.

Other government departments and institutions must work closely and in partnership with experts to overcome what was a highly organised policy by the former regime to destroy our social, cultural and economic values, executed through the destruction of villages and the resettlement of villagers in collective camps.

Our people were transformed from an active and productive society, to a passive consumer society. The culture of dependency, laziness and low or zero productivity used to be alien to Kurdish society. The former regime resorted to this plan in order to undermine our people.

We as the Kurdistan Regional Government are proud of our Region's people. We want all individuals, who are our greatest asset and resource, to rely on their talents and unlimited capabilities, and stay away from this culture that was once imposed on them by force.

We want to serve our people in the best way and for this purpose we want all to participate in carrying out their specific duties and obligations.

Civil servants must carry out all their work sincerely and faithfully to accomplish their duty, not just watch the hands of the clock and wait for the day's end. They must feel responsible for the land, the people and the future of this Region.

Workers must carry out their work steadfastly and earnestly, and comply with high standards rather than becoming negligent.

Contractors have a great responsibility on their shoulders, and need to work conscientiously and faithfully to fulfill their obligations. Those awarded project contracts must stay committed to the standards and legal requirements specified in the contract

Contractors, and all who participate in the implementation of the process, must work with maximum transparency and openness, and present all outcomes of their work to the public.

Engineers have to be examples of honesty and loyalty, and must bring trust to their work. If negligent when supervising projects for the government, it not only adds to a learned trend of laziness, but provides opportunity for corruption and reflects negatively on the people and the Region itself.

We are working to rehabilitate and develop a nation which has faced destruction since its beginnings.

Industrial talent and capabilities have been dispersed. Using the capabilities that we have, we have to focus on advances in science and technology, develop our ability to progress further, and reconstruct our nation.

It is clear that this conference is a good start so that our continued steps will be scientific and practical, relying on proposals raised by experts like all of you attending this conference.

We know that throughout the world, corruption and obstruction are taking place on all scales. When a bridge collapses for no apparent reason, or when a road is constantly buckling and cracking, negligence and corruption exists. We in the Kurdistan Region face a greater duty than those with complete peace and stability.

A few years is a short period of time to rebuild a country which has faced destruction on all fronts. This is especially apparent within the Kurdistan Region.

The outcome of unprofessional work, waste of national wealth, and non-compliance with international standards in implementing projects, had a negative impact on the economy and our self-reliance. Our budgets and national resources are the property of every individual in our society and they should only be used to serve the best interests of the Kurdistan Region and its people.

Here I would like to ask every individual to feel responsible for the natural resources of the Kurdistan Region and at the same time for everyone to oversee the way these resources are used. It is clear that collective action of groups and organisations is the key to having good results.

I want to ask civil society organisations, the press and all media outlets for their cooperation in ensuring transparency, to disclose all cases of negligence and shortfalls, and to watch the construction activities in the Kurdistan Region.

Each one of us, based on our own duties, is responsible for the advancement of our society, and all must play a role in the process of change. Progress cannot take root when everyone waits for the government to act and no individual initiative is taken. In order to progress, we must all work together.

This conference is the first step in the process that should be implemented in order to successfully establish a strong engineering, construction and design industry in the Kurdistan Region.

We in the KRG will carefully consider and study the views, propositions and recommendations that will be formulated from this conference.

Additionally, we will formulate more policies and will establish financial institutions to support more programmes. We believe that contracting, engineering and design companies will be the most effective tools for increasing the benefits for more local and foreign investment into the region.

These companies will be an important link to connect the Kurdistan Region with world progress in the areas of science and technology and will also be effective foundations to strengthen and activate the economy, promote sustainable development, and improve the living conditions of the people.

Once again I welcome you and I wish you and this conference much success.

I hope you succeed in your efforts and I specially thank those who have travelled a long way to be with us today.

Thank you.

This article can also be found at: www.krg.org

Note: BGR Holding, LLC, has filed registration statements under the Foreign Agents Registration Act with regard to its representation and dissemination of information on behalf of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq. Additional information is on file with the Foreign Agents Registration Unit of the Department of Justice in Washington, DC.